MASTER YOUR FOCUS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO STOP CHASING THE NEXT THING AND
FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS
UNTIL IT'S DONE

THIBAUT MEURISSE

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Table of Contents

Master your Focus: A Practical Guide to Stop Chasing the Next Thing and Focus on What Matters Until It's Done
Who is this book for?
Why this book
Introduction
Your Free Step-By-Step Action Guide
I. What focus is and why it's so important
1. The different types of focus
2. Focus and productivity
II. Knowing what you want
1. The power of vision
2. Fifteen key questions to help you gain clarity
3. Clarifying your values
4. Creating a compelling vision
5. Strengthening your "why"
6. The four motivators
III. Planning effectively
1. Breaking down your goals
2. How to create an accountability system that works
IV. Developing ruthless focus
1. Prioritizing
2. Approaching a task the correct way
3. Making the right domino fall
4. The power of less
5. Scheduling everything
6. Focusing on one big project at a time
7. Increasing your energy
V. Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome
1. Why you keep chasing the next big thing
2. Overcoming the Shiny Object Syndrome
3. Assessing the value of information
4. How to select the right product for you
5. How to evaluate the value of a course
6. Understanding the importance of mastery

VI. Overcoming procrastination
1. Ten simple steps to overcome procrastination
2. How to overcome perfectionism
VII. Seventeen strategies to boost your focus
Strategies to boost your focus
Conclusion
What do you think?
About the Author
Also By Thibaut Meurisse

MASTER YOUR FOCUS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO STOP CHASING THE NEXT THING AND FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS UNTIL IT'S DONE

THIBAUT MEURISSE

Master your Focus

A Practical Guide to Stop Chasing the Next Thing and Focus on What Matters Until It's Done

Thibaut Meurisse

Contents

- Master your Focus: A Practical Guide to Stop Chasing the Next Thing and Focus on What Matters Until It's Done
- Who is this book for?
- Why this book
- Introduction
- Your Free Step-By-Step Action Guide
- I. What focus is and why it's so important
- 1. The different types of focus
- 2. Focus and productivity
- II. Knowing what you want
- 1. The power of vision
- 2. Fifteen key questions to help you gain clarity
- 3. Clarifying your values
- 4. Creating a compelling vision
- 5. Strengthening your "why"
- 6. The four motivators
- III. Planning effectively
- 1. Breaking down your goals
- 2. How to create an accountability system that works
- IV. Developing ruthless focus
- 1. Prioritizing
- 2. Approaching a task the correct way
- 3. Making the right domino fall
- 4. The power of less
- 5. Scheduling everything
- 6. Focusing on one big project at a time
- 7. Increasing your energy
- V. Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome
- 1. Why you keep chasing the next big thing
- 2. Overcoming the Shiny Object Syndrome
- 3. Assessing the value of information

- 4. How to select the right product for you
- 5. How to evaluate the value of a course
- 6. Understanding the importance of mastery
- VI. Overcoming procrastination
- 1. Ten simple steps to overcome procrastination
- 2. How to overcome perfectionism
- VII. Seventeen strategies to boost your focus
- Strategies to boost your focus
- Conclusion
- What do you think?
- About the Author
- Also By Thibaut Meurisse

Who is this book for?

Do you keep jumping from one goal to another? Do you procrastinate? Do you hustle without having much to show for your efforts?

You will greatly benefit from this book if:

You continually procrastinate on important tasks,

You keep chasing the next goal, never achieving anything significant,

You feel overwhelmed and there never seems to be enough hours in the day,

You have many unfinished projects and little results to show for your endeavors,

You want to achieve great things but feel you're never quite getting there, or

You can't focus effectively because you're unsure of what you want.

If you recognize yourself in any of the situations mentioned above, read on.

Why this book

Over all the years I spent studying personal development, I've noticed one key reason that prevents people from achieving their goals. It is their inability to focus on one thing for long enough to achieve tangible results. If you're reading this, you're probably facing the same issue.

This book is designed to help you understand why you keep jumping from one thing to another without ever achieving your full potential. But, more importantly, it's here to teach you how to stay focused and avoid chasing the latest big thing: the next exciting diet, the next seemingly wonderful idea, the next great course, et cetera. This book will help you finally obtain the results you want.

More specifically, you'll learn:

What focus is and why it is vital you increase yours,

How to remain crystal clear regarding what you want,

How to plan effectively, to help you make every day count,

How to develop ruthless focus, so you will achieve more without feeling overwhelmed,

How to stop chasing the next big thing and stay focused until you obtain the results you want,

How to find the right information and use it to maximize your results,

How to overcome procrastination once and for all, and finally

The seventeen strategies to boost your focus and achieve much, much more.

Introduction

Do you keep jumping from one thing to another without ever getting the results you seek?

Many people struggle to focus on one thing until it's one hundred percent completed. This is true both in the short term with their daily tasks but also, and most especially, in the longer term with their major goals. They keep jumping from one diet, course or business idea to another, never achieving the results they want. Perhaps, you're one of them if:

You've tried all the diets available but have still failed to lose weight,

You've experimented with dozens of ways to make money online but none of them seemed to work,

You've started multiple businesses but none of them ever took off, or

You have too many active projects on your plate and struggle to handle them all at once.

As a result of these setbacks you may have lost confidence in yourself. You may envy successful people. Worse still, you may experience deep frustration, knowing these people aren't smarter than you nor do they work harder or have more passion.

Don’t feel bad about it. Many of us experience, or have experienced, these issues at some point in our lives. It is often the result of a lack of consistent focus.

Focus is one of the most important assets you will ever have, which is why it’s constantly under attack. Marketers spend billions on advertising to catch your attention. Bloggers use clickbait titles to encourage you to read their content. And YouTubers use creative thumbnails to entice you to watch their videos.

Why is your focus so powerful?

Focus acts like an ax. If you try to cut down a tree by hitting it in thousands of different spots, you’ll never succeed. But when you focus and hit the same spot over and over, you can cut down even the biggest tree. With laser-sharp focus you can achieve almost anything you desire.

However, most people wander through life with a scattered focus, attacking their goals from too many different angles. As a result, they never accomplish anything important. They either hit dozens of trees a few times each, or they hit the same tree in dozens of different places. To sum up, these people have too many goals or approach their goals without the necessary focus.

This behavior will never lead to great results in your life. In fact, if you’re unable to understand this issue and do the necessary work to solve it, you will never achieve your biggest goals or dreams.

This book will help you focus on one thing at a time until you achieve your desired results.

Remember, your focus is powerful but only when you sustain it for long enough and point it in the right direction. Often, it is not the smarter person who achieves the best results, it's the most focused one. An average person with laser focus can, over time, accomplish more than a genius with poor focus.

In Part I of this book, we'll explain what focus is and why it matters. You'll discover the different types of focus and understand why focus drives true productivity.

In Part II, we'll see how to gain clarity regarding your goals. We'll discuss why you need a long-term vision to strengthen your daily focus.

In Part III, we'll create a crystal-clear plan to help you understand what you need to do every day. This will further increase your focus.

In Part IV, we'll work on developing a ruthless focus. You'll learn all the things you can do to skyrocket your attention, boost your productivity and stop feeling overwhelmed.

In Part V, we'll discuss how to stop chasing the next big thing to help you pinpoint what truly matters and achieve the results you want. We'll see exactly why you're attracted to novelty and teach you how to overcome this tendency.

In Part VI, we'll discover why you procrastinate and how to avoid it. You'll discover how to deal with perfectionism as well as how to build momentum day after day.

Finally, in Part VII, I'll share with you Seventeen Strategies to boost your focus so you can get more done and achieve the results you deserve.

As you learn to sharpen your focus, you'll notice better results in your life. You may even wake up one day having accomplished most, if not all, the things you wanted.

So, are you ready to boost your focus and finally achieve the results you want?

Your Free Step-By-Step Action Guide

Your Free Step-By-Step Action Guide

To help you master your focus, I've created a free action guide. Make sure you download it at the following URL:

https://whatispersonaldevelopment.org/master-your-focus

If you have any difficulty downloading the action guide, contact me at: thibaut.meurisse@gmail.com and I will send you a copy as soon as possible.

Part I

What focus is and why it's so important

Your ability to focus is one of the most important assets you have.

Why?

Focus is a magical tool that can both slow and magnify time. And time is one of the scarcest and most valuable resources you will ever have.

When you're in a deep state of focus, you become far more productive and creative than otherwise. Ideas flow, gestures become more precise and your mind-chattering is reduced significantly. It may almost feel as if you are living in slow motion. This is what we can refer to as "short-term focus," or "concentration." On the other hand, when you lose focus, it is difficult to return your attention to a task. According to a study conducted by the University of California Irvine, on average, it takes around twenty-three minutes to return to a task after having been distracted.

You can also think of your focus as a sharp ax that can cut through anything you concentrate on for long enough. When you learn to focus on a specific endeavor for long enough, you will improve your results exponentially. To

reuse our previous analogy, this is hitting a tree at the same spot over and over again until it falls. We can call this “long-term focus.”

What happens when you lack focus?

You become the slave of time. Everything seems to go faster, and you end up merely reacting to your environment. In short, you have little sense of control, which is due to a lack of short-term focus.

Alternatively, your mind is all over the place and, rather than traveling in one clear direction, you’re moving left, right, backward, et cetera, without making any significant forward progress. This is the result of a lack of long-term focus. You simply don’t know where you’re heading.

In the end, what you choose to focus your attention on every day will determine your future. When your focus is sharp and directed toward a definite outcome, your time is well-spent. As a result, you’re able to achieve most of the results you want in all areas of your life. But when your focus is scattered, your ability to produce tangible outcomes is severely limited. As a result, you struggle to achieve anything significant.

For instance, if you focus on changing your career and put your attention toward that goal every day, you’ll eventually achieve it. Alternatively, if you focus on that goal only once in while or seek to create multiple side hustles instead, you’ll likely fail. Even if you do succeed, it will take you far longer than necessary.

By now, I hope you understand why your focus is such a valuable asset. If you fail to take control of it, everybody around you—family, media, politicians, marketers, et cetera—will seek to direct it toward the things they want you to think about or do. Or you will let your mind wander, losing focus throughout the day.

Instead of being proactive, you'll be reactive, which is why so many people jump from one thing to the next or say yes to everything instead of focusing on what they want to create.

Now, let's have a look at the different types of focus in greater depth.

1

The different types of focus

I've divided focus into three types:

Short-term focus (concentration)

Transitional focus (planning/routine), and

Long-term focus (vision).

These three types of focus are interconnected.

Short-term focus is your ability to focus on the task at hand without being distracted by your thoughts, internal chatter or sudden ideas, or by your environment, noises, people interrupting you, et cetera. It is your ability to concentrate. When you concentrate effectively, you enter a state of flow and become far more productive. Your short-term focus can be enhanced through the implementation of adequate routines, proper planning and consistent practice.

Transitional focus consists of the scheduling and daily routines you implement to remain focused long-term. It allows you to be efficient during your day by moving from one task to the other smoothly and

effectively. For example, it can prevent you from wasting time on social media or working on ineffective tasks.

Long-term focus is the big picture, which determines what you must focus on every day. It is your vision. The clearer you can make your vision, the easier it will be to create an effective plan to work from.

To sum up:

Your big picture vision (long-term focus) allows you to plan effectively and to put in place adequate routines (transitional focus) which, in turn, boosts your concentration (short-term focus). When these three types of focus are combined, true productivity happens.

2

Focus and productivity

Your ability to focus determines your productivity and whether or not you'll achieve your goals. It involves mastering the three types of focus.

Now, let's look in more depth at what true productivity really is. I believe we can identify five levels of productivity.

1) Procrastinating. This is the lowest level of (non-)productivity. You usually procrastinate due to the following:

Fear. You're afraid of not doing a good enough job, fear being rejected or are scared of the unknown.

Lack of clarity. You don't know what you should be doing to make progress on your goals, and you feel stuck.

Lack of motivation. You don't have a clear vision and therefore are not motivated to work on your tasks.

Lack of energy. You don't have the energy to work on a particular task at the moment.

As a result, you may put off key tasks by avoiding:

Cold calling potential clients due to the fear of rejection,

Writing your book because of the fear of doing a subpar job,

Beginning a new project since you don't know where to start, or

Working on challenging tasks because you have little energy left.

In any of the above situations, your short-term focus (concentration), transitional focus (planning/routines) and long-term focus (vision) are often poor. In short, your vision might be unclear, your ability to concentrate might be poor and you may have no specific planning or effective routine to ensure you avoid becoming overly distracted.

Solutions:

Identify the reason(s) you procrastinate (fear or lack of clarity, motivation or energy).

Address each of these situations to improve your focus.

When necessary, clarify your vision, improve your plan or put in place routines to help you complete your tasks.

In Part VI, we'll see how to overcome procrastination so you can work on the tasks that truly matter.

2) Working on the wrong things. This is when you work on unproductive tasks that contribute little to your overall vision.

When you work on the wrong things, your short-term and long-term focus might be good, but your transitional focus is poor.

For instance, you may spend hours creating a video book trailer that will have a negligible impact on your sales. Or you may try to sell a product by knocking door-to-door, while there are much more effective ways to sell.

Solutions:

Spend more time to identify the key tasks you need to focus on to achieve your goals. To do so, look for role models and buy books, courses or products from people who have already achieved your goals.

In the sections, Assessing the Value of Information and How to Select the Right Product for You, we will see how you can find the right information and implement it effectively.

3) Working on things that don't improve your life. This is when you work on tasks that move you away from the life you want to create.

When you work on such tasks, your concentration and planning skills might be excellent, but your ultimate vision isn't. You're either working from someone else's plan or you lack a clear vision.

For instance, this is the case when you put your energy and focus toward a dead-end job that is miles away from your ideal career. This is also the case when you spend your time and effort trying to fix the broken relationships you probably shouldn't keep.

Solutions:

Spend time clarifying your long-term vision.

Create a detailed action plan to get there.

Do at least one small thing every day that moves you closer to your vision.

For more on this, refer to Part II, Knowing what you want, and Part III, Planning effectively.

4) Working on the right things. This is when you work on the tasks or projects that move you toward your vision.

You've identified the key tasks that move the needle and what you do every day is effective. In short, your vision is clear and your planning effective. However, you may lack concentration. For example, you may check your

emails dozens of time throughout the day or go on social media every fifteen minutes.

Solutions:

Perform a digital detox.

Implement a daily morning routine that includes your most important task(s).

For more on this, refer to the sections, Making the right domino fall and, Going on a digital detox.

5) Working on the right things the right way. This is when true productivity happens.

Your short-term, transitional and long-term focus are great. That is, your vision is exciting, your plan is well-designed, and your concentration is excellent. This is the situation you should aim for—it will allow you to achieve most of your goals over the long term.

In the next section, we'll look at what you can do to gain clarity regarding what you really want, which will help you develop a compelling vision and enhance your focus.

* * *

Action step

Using the action guide, assess your current level of productivity.

Part II

Knowing what you want

Do you know exactly what you want? The more clarity you have, the more likely you are to reach the desired outcomes in your life.

In fact, I contend that a lack of clarity is one of the main reasons people don't achieve their goals. Most people only have vague goals and, at best, vague goals promote vague results.

To know what you should focus on every day, you must establish a clear vision for your life. Personally, whatever I do each day is geared toward leading me to the future I want to create. As far as work is concerned, I don't do things randomly or on a whim. I do things with my long-term plan in mind, and I believe you should do the same.

Your ability to think long-term is one of the best predictors of your success. In my book Success is Inevitable, I call this, The Law of Long-Term Thinking. When you focus on your vision every day, you are far less likely to jump from one thing to the next and to fall for the Shiny Object Syndrome (see the section, Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome).

Having a clear vision allows you to craft an effective plan, which you can break down into smaller tasks. As you complete these small tasks every day, you can be confident that you are heading in the right direction.

The bottom line is that it's difficult to improve your focus unless you know where you're going. Sure, you can have an incredible ability to concentrate, but if what you focus on doesn't improve your life, why are you doing it in the first place?

Keep in mind that what you do every day is either moving you toward your goals or away from them. In this regard, one of my favorite questions is, "If I keep doing what I'm doing today, will I end up where I want to be five years from now?" Asking myself this question helps me:

Ensure I make every day count,

Identify key tasks I must work on, and

Avoid kidding myself by working on unproductive tasks.

When I answer "No" to this question for too many days, I know something has to change.

What about you? If you keep doing what you're doing today, or this week, will you end up where you want to be in five years?

1

The power of vision

The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.

Helen Keller, author and political activist.

The thing differentiating humans from other living beings is our ability to imagine things that aren't there and our ability to create them. This creative power allows us to achieve extraordinary things. You have the same power inside you. You can envision the way you want your life to be and turn this into a reality.

Creating a compelling vision for your life enhances both your short- and long-term focus, allowing you to feel more centered and more productive.

What is your "why"?

Are you clear on your purpose? You can't focus unless you have clarity. This is why successful people continuously seek clarity regarding their goals. As the high-performance coach, Brendon Burchard, wrote in High Performance Habits:

“In one survey, we asked over twenty thousand people to read the following statements and rate themselves on a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being “strongly disagree,” and 5 being “strongly agree:”

I know who I am. I’m clear about my values, strengths, and weaknesses.

I know what I want. I’m clear about my goals and passions.

I know how to get what I want. I have a plan to achieve my dreams.

The higher the scores on questions such as these, the better the overall high-performance scores.”

If you want to perform at your best and boost your focus, make sure you continuously seek clarity in your life.

Similarly, in his excellent book, The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results, Gary Keller argues that no true productivity is possible without a clear purpose.

To me, this makes complete sense. Without a specific purpose, it is impossible to set the right priorities and focus on what matters. Your purpose is what dictates your priorities. And it is by focusing on your priorities that you reach optimal productivity.

Perhaps, right now, you're unsure of what your priorities should be. If so, let's have a look at some key questions to help you gain clarity. I encourage you to answer the following questions, even if you feel as though you already have a pretty good idea of what you want.

2

Fifteen key questions to help you gain clarity

The more self-aware you are, the easier it becomes to set the right goals and focus on what matters to you. In this section, we'll review a few questions that will help you discover what you want. These questions are divided into three categories:

Eliciting your desire,

Finding your strengths and unique abilities, and

Uncovering your passion.

Make sure you answer each question using your action guide.

1) Eliciting desire

1. What do you really, really want?

On the surface, this is a rather simple question. Yet, most of us haven't taken enough time to think about it. Using your action guide, write down

anything that comes to mind. Make sure you include all your crazy goals and dreams. Don't limit yourself. Treat this as the brainstorming phase.

Now, look at your list. Identify your top two or three goals. Which of them do you really, really want above all the others?

2. If you were to wake up tomorrow, completely alone without any family member, friend or colleague to influence your decisions, what would you do differently?

Your family members—especially your parents—or acquaintances may have led you to make wrong decisions, such as choosing the wrong career or dating the wrong person. Imagine you could do anything you wanted without anyone judging you. What would you do differently?

3. If you were to be totally honest with yourself, what would you start doing now? What would you stop doing?

Spend a few minutes to focus on what you want, deep down. Is what you're currently doing today what you really want to do? If you keep doing what you're doing today, this week or this month, will you be where you want to be in five or ten years? In short, are you focusing on the right things?

Answering this question requires a heavy dose of honesty.

4. If you were guaranteed to succeed in everything you do, where would want to be in three years?

Let go of any mental limitations. What's the best possible place you could be mentally, physically, spiritually and financially in three years? Do you want more freedom? Do you want to find the right partner? Do you want to pursue a career you love? Write down everything you want.

5. If you could spend your day exactly the way you wanted to, what would you be doing from morning to night? What would your ideal day consist of?

Close your eyes and imagine yourself during your ideal day. What does it look like? What time do you wake? What are you eating for breakfast? What activities are you engaging in? Who are you spending time with? In which country or city are you living and in what kind of house?

The more clarity you have, the better.

Remember, people who know exactly what they want are more likely to attain it than those who don't. This is because they know what they need to focus on every day. The question is, do you?

To clarify your vision further, don't hesitate to run through this exercise over and over in the coming weeks or months.

6. If you could focus only on doing one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Although you might struggle with this question, try to answer it as best you can. What one thing could you possibly commit to for the rest of your life? Pick just one thing, and make sure it's the most important thing to you.

7. If you understood and truly believed you could achieve absolutely anything you want by sticking to it for long enough, what would you pursue in the next three to five years?

What is the one goal you want to achieve the most right now? What really excites you? Could you do whatever it takes for as long as necessary until you achieve it?

By now, you should have a better idea of what you want. Feel free to review these questions several times. Clarity is something that needs to be refined over time. Don't expect to find the right answer first time and, don't forget, it's possible to change it whenever necessary.

2) Finding your strengths and unique abilities

Identifying your strengths and working from them is one of the most important things you can do to ensure you place your focus where it should be. If you spend your days doing the things you are poor or mediocre at, you'll never achieve extraordinary results, and you will probably feel

miserable as a result. Therefore, identify your strengths and use them as often as possible.

Also, remember that, when sustained over a long period of time, your focus will lead to exponential results. You will get far better results when you invest your time and effort doing what you excel at.

Think about it this way: would you rather magnify your strengths or your weaknesses? What would be the long-term consequences of doing one versus the other?

The questions below will help you discover your biggest strengths and unique abilities:

8. When are you the happiest at work and what are you doing?

You may love your job or hate it, but there will likely be times when you feel happy and engaged in the tasks you perform. In the coming week, start noticing these moments. What are you doing specifically? And what does this say about your strengths and passions?

9. What do you find so easy to do you genuinely wonder why others struggle to do the same thing?

Perhaps your communication skills are excellent. Perhaps you're a great listener. Perhaps you can synthesize information the way nobody else can. However, because these skills come so easily, you may not realize it as an important attribute.

From experience, I can tell you, if every day feels like a struggle, you're probably not acting from your strengths. If so, spend extra time identifying your strengths, act on them and things will become easier for you.

10. What do people around you say you're great at?

What do other people compliment you on? What do they say you're good at? It's often easier for people who know you to identify your strengths than it is for you to do it yourself. This is because you have many blind spots and need an external point of view. One thing you can do is send a message to your family, friends and colleagues and ask them to share with you what they think your biggest strengths are. For example, you could use the template below:

Hi_____,

How are you?

I'm trying to identify my strengths so I can use them to design a more fulfilling career and life. I need your perspective on what you consider I am really good at.

I'd really appreciate if you could provide me with honest feedback and give me a list of the strengths you think I have.

Please don't be afraid to tell me anything that comes to mind.

Thanks so much for your support.

Warm regards,

Your Name

For instance, several people have told me I have a gift for synthesizing information. I could have chosen not to make any further effort to improve my craft. However, this is not what I chose to do. On the contrary, I decided to focus on this "gift" and hone my skills until I become the best I can be.

Below are two comments I received from my readers in that regard:

"You have a great gift for synthesizing information into pure crystal clarity."

“You have the gift of presenting this subject in the simplest of terms, which I am finding quite profound.”

What about you? What are your gifts?

If you need further guidance on how to identify your strengths, I encourage you to read my free book, Find What You Love: 5 Tips to Find Your Passion Quickly and Easily.

3) Uncovering your passion

Do you know what you’re passionate about? If not, this section will help you identify your passion(s). Make sure you take the time to answer the following questions.

11. What did you enjoy doing when you were a kid?

Often, what we did when we were kids reveals certain aspects of our personality. As time passes, we tend to become distracted by life (school, sport or video games). As a kid, I used to read a lot. Sometimes, I read most of the day. When I was eight, I used to write short stories. Ironically, it took me over twenty years to return to writing, and this was something I would never have predicted.

It’s your turn now. What did you enjoy doing when you were a kid?

12. Who do you envy and why?

Being envious of other people generally means they have something you want. I used to be jealous of successful personal development bloggers. I wanted to do the same thing they were doing. This led me to start a personal development blog and later to write books like this one.

So who would you say you envy and what are these people doing? What do they have that you want? And what does it say about your passion(s)?

13. If you had all the time and money in the world, what would you do?

This question removes issues most people have, like lack of time and money. It also gives you an opportunity to think about what you want to do more creatively and without boundaries. Most people believe that if they had tons of money, they would retire and live happily ever after. However, in truth, they would most likely grow bored and would need to find activities that bring them fulfillment, lest they end up unhappy with their so-called perfect life.

What about you? What would you do in such a situation?

14. If you had complete confidence and were already your absolute best self, what would you be doing with your life?

This question helps you remove any sense of limiting fear, and it can also help you find clarity on what you really want to do. Remember, your best self is already within you. As you start believing in yourself and envisioning who you want to be, you'll begin to act differently. So, what does the confident you look like and what is he or she doing?

15. How do you want to express yourself to the world?

Do you want to entertain, educate, inspire, heal, teach or create? What emotions do you want people to feel as a result of the work you're doing? This question helps you clarify your means of expression and how you want to serve the world.

In the end, I believe we are all here to express ourselves fully. Finding our passion means expressing ourselves in an authentic way and sharing our gifts with the world.

What is your gift and how do you want to share it?

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, answer each of the above questions.

3

Clarifying your values

Your value determines what you do and why you do it. Therefore, the more you know your values, the easier it is to make the right decisions and say "No" to everything else.

People with unclear values often accept requests and projects out of alignment with who they are and what they want. Because they have no effective benchmark (values) to refer to when making decisions, they end up scattering their focus.

Do you know your core values? Do you understand what truly matters to you?

It is essential for you to live by your core values and embody them every day. Otherwise, they become mere ideals you pretend to care about. When something is important to you, it becomes part of who you are and what you do every day.

For instance, one of my core values is "autonomy." One implication is that I want to avoid having a traditional 9-to-5 job. As a result, what I do every day is geared toward creating more autonomy or maintaining the autonomy I already have.

Concretely, it means that I spend time every day creating products (mostly books) that will generate long-term revenue as opposed to getting paid for my time. Alternatively, I network with other authors and try to acquire new readers to generate a bigger audience for my books.

Another core value I have is “contribution.” I live by this value and create content that will help other people improve their lives.

Yet another core value I hold is “growing.” I love learning new things. When I do, I’m happy. When I don’t, I feel as though something is missing.

You can access a list of values here. Since values are personal, I encourage you to spend time on your own to identify your core values. You can then refer to the list to further refine them if needed.

Below are two key characteristics of core values:

Your values should be specific. Perhaps you stated that freedom matters most to you. Or maybe you value safety over anything else. If so, what exactly you do mean by “freedom” and “safety”? Your definition of freedom is likely to differ from mine.

For example, freedom could be:

Being self-employed and not having a boss telling you what to do,

Having the ability to take a vacation whenever you want, or

Having autonomy at work.

Safety could mean:

Working for the government or a major conglomerate with little or no risk of being sacked,

Living in a neighborhood where you can go out at any time of the day or night without fear for your safety, or

Having the confidence in your ability to switch jobs or find a new job easily because of the experience and the skills you have developed over the years.

As you can see, the same values can mean different things to different people.

Your values should be non-negotiable. Because your core values are what matter most to you, they naturally act as guiding principles for your life. This means, when you face situations that challenge your values, you are able to stand firm to those values. For instance, if honesty is your most important value, you'll go the extra mile to ensure your behavior and decisions are consistent with this value.

If freedom—manifesting as being self-employed—is your most important value, you'll fight hard to maintain or create that situation. You'll work for

someone else only if you have no choice or if it is part of your long-term goal to become self-employed (e.g., the desire to learn a new skill or gain experience).

The point I'm making is that values are something you naturally strive to live by. Your values aren't:

Things you believe you should do (which implies external pressure to conform to something you aren't naturally drawn towards), or

Dreams and desires (which implies things you aren't living by right now)

* * *

Action step

Spend time to identify your core values by completing the corresponding exercises in your action guide.

4

Creating a compelling vision

The clearer your long-term vision is, the easier it will be to create a specific action plan and break it down into daily tasks. By knowing what you need to do every day, you will dramatically boost your focus.

Your vision is how you picture your life when you project yourself into the future. It encompasses your values, your passions, your strengths and the contribution you want to make to people around you. It includes every aspect of your life, such as your relationships, career, finance, emotional well-being and your physical health.

Don’t worry, you don’t need to have absolute clarity regarding your vision. There is no such thing as having the perfect vision anyway. Envisage your vision as the overall destination you want to move toward. Consider the following questions:

What does my ideal career look like?

What kind of relationship do I want to be in?

How do I want my health to be?

What does my social life look like?

What emotional states do I want to experience every day?

Now, what do you need to focus on every today, this week or this year to make your vision comes true?

Remember, what you focus on every day should be aligned with your overall vision as much as possible. Otherwise, you're at risk of wasting your time and weakening your focus.

For now, I encourage you to focus on one specific area. Bear in mind that every area of your life is interconnected. Your career affects your family life and vice versa. Your finances might affect your family life too. As can your health. Consequently, improving one area of your life can have a positive impact on several other areas.

Ask yourself, "If I were to focus on one area during the next six months to a year, which one would make the biggest impact on my life?" Is it sorting out your finances? Improving your satisfaction at work? Taking care of your health? Finding a suitable partner?

Just pick one for now.

In Part III, Planning Effectively, we'll see how you can break down your vision into specific goals.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, create or refine your compelling vision.

5

Strengthening your "why"

As the business philosopher, Jim Rohn, said, "When the why gets stronger, the how gets easier."

One of the biggest challenges you have to overcome is the need for instant gratification. The truth is, at any given moment, there is an on-going battle in your mind between the part of you seeking instant gratification and the part wanting to achieve your biggest dreams. If you can't delay this gratification, you'll keep falling short of your expectations in various areas of your life.

To overcome the urge for instant gratification, the excitement you derive from your long-term vision must be greater than the one you experience from immediate pleasures. In effect, the long-term reward must be—or at least feel—more important than any short-term rewards, such as watching TV, eating your favorite ice-cream, playing with your phone, et cetera. This is why having a compelling vision is so important.

So, what is your "why"?

Why is it essential for you to accomplish your long-term vision? What will motivate you when the going gets tough? When it comes to creating an

exciting vision, people often make the following mistakes:

They have no real vision,

Their vision is too vague and doesn't excite them,

They haven't identified compelling reasons why their vision must come true, or

They don't think about their vision and review it enough.

There are many reasons you may want to pursue a certain vision. It might be to help people, to feed your family, to pursue your passion or to create more freedom in your life. Now, to be inspired and motivated, you must make sure your current vision is aligned with your core values and deepest goals.

For instance:

If you aspire to greater freedom, your current vision should support that goal and not create more restrictions in your life.

If you want to make a difference in the world, your current vision must enable you to do that and not make you feel as though what you do is meaningless.

If you want to spend more time with your family, your current vision must allow you to do so and not have the opposite effect.

If you want to earn a living doing what you love, your current vision must move you in that direction and not keep you stuck at a dead-end job.

The point is that if your vision goes against everything you value, it is probably not your true vision. It's merely something you're pursuing because it seems the right thing to do according to society's standards.

For example, if you want to have a minimalistic lifestyle to retire early but, in fact, squander money to keep up with the Joneses, you're unlikely to fulfill your overall vision.

If you want to make a living from your passion but spend most of your time and effort trying to get a promotion to advance your unfulfilling career, you're unlikely to make your vision a reality either.

While this may sound obvious it is actually what many people do. They say they want one thing, but their daily actions move them in a different direction entirely.

To sum up, you need to make sure:

You have a clear vision,

You're moving closer to that vision every day, and

You have compelling enough reasons why this vision must become a reality.

Indeed, the more reasons you have for achieving a goal, the more likely you are to reach it. However, they can't be just intellectual reasons. You have to engage your emotions, too. Without any excitement or emotional connection of some sort, it's almost impossible to achieve any goal.

Think about it. Would you feel motivated to make any money if money meant nothing to you? In truth, you have an emotional relationship with money, and this relationship determines how much money you want to make and why. For instance, you might want to make more money because you want to:

Be recognized and loved,

Take care of your family, and/or

Donate more money to charity.

Or perhaps you want to become wealthy because you see money as a result of the value you provide to society. And you want to make a big contribution.

The point is, that you move toward a goal because it means something to you. It might be to avoid pain, seek pleasure, make a difference in the world or to be loved.

6

The four motivators

I believe there are four types of motivators that lead us to act.

These four motivators are:

Love,

Desire,

Pain, and

Ego.

Let's look at each motivator in turn.

1) Love

A sincere desire to contribute to the world and make a difference in people's lives will keep you pumped up as you work toward your goal. When you have a compelling vision inspired by love, you'll be fueled by

this vision and the excitement you'll feel about the impact you're making. The more you act from love and from the need to give back, the easier it will be for you to stay motivated. This is the deeper "why" behind your goal.

2) Desire

Desire is different from love in that it's not about contributing to other people. It focuses instead on designing the life you want for yourself. It's about living life on your own terms.

Having goals that excite you will bolster your motivation significantly. You'll feel connected to your goals, to the point that reminding yourself of what you'll gain from working on it should keep you going.

For example, one of my goals is to create an online business I'm passionate about and can make a living from. A few benefits I can think of include:

Having the freedom to travel the world while working on my business,

Having the ability to spend time with my family,

Having the freedom to live in different countries and learn foreign languages,

Having the freedom to take vacations whenever I want,

Being able to spend time doing what I love,

Having the potential to earn more money by scaling up my business (which would be impossible if I worked for someone else),

Being in a situation where I can, and must, grow consistently and become a better person, and

Having more time to spend on my personal growth (seminars, meditation, side projects, et cetera).

These are all things that motivate me to work on my goals every single day.

3) Pain

Nobody wants to suffer, and we spend a lot of time shying away from pain. When used intelligently, pain can be an effective tool to motivate you when you'd rather do nothing.

When I was an employee, there were many times when I didn't feel like working on my online business. After a rough workday, I'd return home exhausted, wanting to rest. I bet you can relate to this feeling! I handled this by focusing on the pain I'd endure if I didn't work on my business and create the life I wanted. I asked myself the following questions:

Do I want to work a job I hate for the rest of my life?

Do I want to be caught in rush hour every morning for the next forty years?

Do I want to have a boss telling me what to do when I already know what I want to do with my life?

When I reach my deathbed, will I regret not having done what I know I should have? How much pain will I experience when I realize I didn't have the courage, determination and perseverance to follow my dreams?

Can I accept the pain and regret of not facing my fear and failing to make a difference through my work?

The idea of spending forty years at a job I couldn't stand gave me a serious boost of motivation. Freedom is what I value most and, being unable to enjoy the level of freedom I want, is excruciating.

4) Ego

Ego can also be a powerful motivator. You can use your desire to be successful, feel loved or prove those who didn't believe in you wrong, to your advantage. For example, you might feel a surge of motivation when you think of how proud your parents will be. Or the thought of showing someone who doubts you what you're really made of might get you going.

However, you need to bear in mind that if you feel a constant need to rely on your ego, you might want to spend some time working on yourself. It would be a good idea to figure out why you're trying so hard to obtain the validation of others.

I've relied, and still rely, on all four types of motivation to ensure I keep going. Below are some specific examples organized by category.

Love: Knowing how much impact I can have on other people's lives makes me excited to work on my books.

Pain: When I felt tired after work, I visualized myself staying at a job I hated for forty plus years. This gave me an extra boost of motivation that helped me work on my goals for a few hours even when I didn't feel like it.

Desire: When I feel demotivated, I think of the freedom I'll be able to enjoy once I achieve my goals. This, of course, makes me excited and reenergized.

Ego: Although I don't like to admit it, I sometimes envision myself having achieved my wildest dreams while others admire the person I've become.

What about you? How can you use these four motivators to inspire you to go chase your vision?

* * *

Action step

Create a list of "whys." Come up with at least twenty reasons you must make your vision a reality. Try to select reasons with an emotional component and connect them with your deepest values and aspirations.

Mastering the process

Having a number of compelling reasons why your vision must become a reality is essential. However, it is not always enough. After all, many people spend years trying to lose weight or build their business.

Do these people lack compelling reasons to motivate them?

No.

The problem is often a lack of planning and a faulty implementation due to a misunderstanding of how the whole process works.

In the next section, we're going to see how to plan for maximum effectiveness, so you know what you have to do every day. Then, in the sections, Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome and Understanding the Importance of Mastery, we'll discuss how the process works and what you can do to master it so you can achieve the results you want.

Part III

Planning effectively

To paraphrase the success expert Brian Tracy, most people spend more time writing their grocery lists than they do writing their life plan.

What about you?

Have you ever sat down to write how you want your life to be in the coming ten years? You might have an excellent ability to concentrate on the task in front of you, but if you're working on the wrong task, it's pretty pointless, right?

Most people fail to do adequate planning. Don't be one of them! Instead, develop the habit of preparation. Having a specific strategy will help you spend most of your time working on the right things (i.e., things that move you toward your vision). A well-made strategy allows you to focus better and use your energy more effectively. Without a plan, you can easily become distracted, spending most of your day working on low-value tasks.

In the previous section, you developed a compelling vision. It is now time to break it down into manageable goals and tasks you can achieve daily.

Don’t worry if your vision is still blurry. A vision is never completely set in stone and must be adjusted over time. As you keep taking action every day, you’ll gain clarity on which path to follow.

1

Breaking down your goals

You can only eat an elephant one bite at a time. There is magic in breaking down complex tasks into simple, more manageable ones. No matter how daunting your overall vision may be, when you break it down into yearly goals, 90-day goals, monthly goals, weekly goals and finally, daily goals, it will appear perfectly achievable.

Breaking down your goals is the key to improving your daily focus. Many people think they lack focus because they have too many things to do or simply lack concentration. However, what they often lack is a clear vision, broken down into manageable tasks they can focus on every day.

Here are a few benefits of breaking down your long-term goals:

It forces you to clarify them. You can't break down a goal into small manageable tasks if your goal is unclear to begin with. The process of breaking down your tasks brings further clarity to your vision.

It reduces distractions. When you know exactly what you have to do every day, you're less likely to procrastinate or become distracted along the way. On the other hand, when you don't schedule your day, you leave room for all sorts of distractions (interruptions from colleagues, time spent on unimportant tasks, et cetera).

It prevents you from becoming overwhelmed. For instance, you might not feel confident you can write a whole book, but you can certainly write a few sentences every day. Writing 150 words a day would lead to 54,750 words in a year, which is about the average length for a non-fiction book.

It provides you with a benchmark to assess your progress. When you break down your goals and set specific milestones, it becomes easy for you to know whether or not you're on the right track. There would be no need to wait for the end of the month or year to know if you will achieve your goal. As a result, you can easily adjust your effort to ensure you'll hit your target.

How to break down your vision

Now, let's have a look at precisely what you can do to break down your overall vision into the manageable tasks you can easily accomplish on a daily basis.

Yearly goal

The first thing you need to do is to turn your long-term vision into yearly goals. Ask yourself, what major milestone(s) do you want to accomplish in the next twelve months?

Make sure your yearly goals are SMART, which stands for:

Specific: What exactly do you want? What are you trying to achieve?

Measurable: Can you assess the progress toward your goal easily? How will you know whether you've achieved it?

Achievable: Is it achievable? Is the timeframe realistic? Can you put in the effort required despite all your other responsibilities?

Relevant: Is your vision in line with your values? Does it excite you?

Time-bound: Do you have a clear deadline for your goals?

To go one step further, I invite you to divide your goals into two types:

Process goals.

Result goals.

Both types play an important role and both are necessary to maximize the chances of you achieving your goals. Therefore, make sure you set process goals and result goals.

Process goals

The main characteristics of process goals are as follows:

You have control over them.

When reached, they contribute to the achievement of bigger goals.

They can often be achieved by doing the same specific task consistently/daily.

For instance, one of my goals this year is to sell 50,000 books. Process goals for this specific goal could look like this:

Write and publish six new books.

Run 1,000 new ads using Amazon Marketing Services.

Contact twenty authors for future cross-promotions.

While I can't be certain I will actually sell 50,000 books this year, I do know that by performing these three actions, I may hit that target. And these actions are entirely within my control.

Unfortunately, many people spend too much time and energy trying to achieve result goals they have little-to-no control over. While result goals are important—they give you a direction—process goals are even more important as they allow you to identify key actions within your control. Process goals can often be achieved by completing specific tasks consistently. For instance:

To write six books of 30-35,000 words each and every year, I would need to write approximately 200,000 words. I could do this by creating a habit of writing at least 550 words every day.

To run 1,000 new AMS ads, I could create a daily habit of creating three new ads each day.

To contact twenty authors, I would simply need to contact two authors per month.

In short, what matters the most is what you do consistently. Therefore, identify high-impact tasks you have control over and work on them every day. This will boost your focus and increase your odds of achieving your long-term goals.

Result goals

Results goals are goals you only have indirect control over. For instance, whether or not I sell 50,000 books this year isn't totally under my control—unless I order 50,000 copies myself. However, many things that can help me hit that target are within my control.

Similarly, there is no guarantee you'll achieve your income or weight loss goal this year but there are many things you can do to optimize your chances of success.

For maximum effectiveness you need:

Result goals to give you a direction, and

Process goals to tell you what to focus on daily.

If you keep taking the correct actions every day, you'll be more likely to achieve the results you want in the long term (though it might take more time than you initially thought).

To give you an example, I never stopped writing books almost every day even when I was barely selling any copies. In the same way, you should never stop prospecting clients, applying for your dream job or working on your craft. Do what you need to do every day over and over again until you achieve results.

Focus on the process.

Setting 90-Day goals

I've found 90-day goals to be really effective. This is because, in 90 days, you can make tremendous progress on any project of your choice, especially when you make it your main focus. The trick is to think of each 90-day period as the equivalent of one full year. This mindset shift alone can significantly boost your productivity.

The problem with one-year goals is that they appear intangible. The target is too far away to motivate you. On the other hand, 90-day goals are more immediate and concrete. You can almost see the finishing line. Breaking down your year into 90-day periods will automatically sharpen your focus and create a greater sense of urgency.

When you set your 90-day goals, you want to make them challenging, but not too challenging. Your belief in being able to achieve them should be a 7 or 8 out of 10.

Now, let's see how to set 90-day goals effectively.

1) Define the few key tasks you must accomplish by the end of the 90-day period.

If you were to complete certain key tasks within your 90-day program, which ones would allow you to achieve your yearly goals and ultimately your long-term vision? Each task needs to be vital for the achievement of your goals.

2) Write your tasks down.

You always want to work from a written plan. This is really important. Don't assume that because you know what to do, you don't need to write anything down. You absolutely do need a written plan, and one you will refer to on a regular basis (if possible, every day).

3) Make your 90-day goals SMART.

Make sure your key tasks are specific. Do you know exactly what you have to do? And how will you know whether you've accomplished your goal?

4) Review your 90-day goals daily.

Remember, what you do every day should lead to the achievement of your 90-day goals which, in turn, should lead to the achievement of your yearly goals and your long-term vision. They must all be interconnected. If possible, display your 90-day goals somewhere you can see them every day.

5) Put an accountability system in place.

Many things in this world wouldn't be achieved without accountability. How many writers would finish their books without a deadline from their publishers? How many people would show up at work if their bosses and colleagues didn't notice they were missing?

However, I don't want you to think of accountability as something imposed on you by others. You need to think of it as something you impose on yourself. Nobody can become wealthy, lose weight or design your dream career for you. If it's going to happen, it's entirely up to you. So, create an accountability system—and do it for yourself! Refer to the section, How to Create an Accountability System that Works.

Setting monthly goals

Monthly goals are merely 90-day goals you break down even further.

If you were to accomplish certain key tasks this month, which ones would guarantee you'll reach your 90-day target? What key milestones do you need to hit?

Make sure you select only the key tasks that move the needle in the right direction.

Setting weekly goals

Repeat the process above with your weekly goals. What do you need to accomplish this week to achieve your monthly goals, your 90-day goals, your yearly goals and your long-term vision?

Setting daily goals

Setting daily goals consistently is one of the most important things you can do to guarantee your increased productivity over the long-term. It becomes even more powerful when what you do every day is linked with your long-term goals—and so it should!

Ask yourself:

What do I need to do today to guarantee I will achieve my weekly goals?

Now that you have taken the time to break down your goals into bite-sized chunks, the only thing you need to do is to focus on today's goals. And you need to repeat the same tomorrow and the day after.

This is why creating the right vision and breaking it down meticulously is so important. It allows you to have faith in the daily process and stay focused on the task ahead while avoiding distractions.

In short, it enhances your focus.

I know from personal experience—and from what I've heard from my clients—that breaking down your goals will make things far easier for you. You'll be often amazed at what you'll have accomplished at the end of the 90-day period, and it won't even feel as though it was hard work. More specifically:

Your focus will increase as you know what to work on,

Your productivity will skyrocket as you tackle high-impacts tasks, and

You'll feel less overwhelmed as you have a clear direction to move toward.

These are the benefits of breaking down your tasks. Try it for yourself.

To learn in more depth how o set exciting goals you can refer to my book, Goal Setting: The Ultimate Guide to Achieving Goals that Truly Excite You

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, break down your long-term vision into manageable goals.

2

How to create an accountability system that works

Making yourself accountable is an effective way to ensure you're making progress on the goals that truly matter. When nobody knows what you're up to, it's easier to create excuses and avoid doing what you said you would.

The following steps will help you create an effective accountability system:

1) Find an accountability partner.

If you fail to achieve your weekly goals, who will call you out at the end of the week? Who will ask you what went well, what went wrong and why? I encourage you to work with an accountability partner. Your accountability partner can be a friend, a colleague or someone with a similar goal. To find the right partner for you, answer the following questions:

How disciplined is that person? You want your partner to be disciplined, and the more disciplined the better. Ideally, it should be someone used to setting—and achieving—goals consistently.

Does the person understand your motivations? You want your partner to take his or her role seriously and understand why having an accountability partner is important to you.

Is the person motivated? You want your partner to be motivated and to have specific goals he or she is working toward. You also want to set clear expectations, so the partnership works and you both know what to expect moving forward.

For instance, I've just created a small author mastermind group. I wanted this group to be beneficial for everybody and last for months and possibly years. This is why I took extra care in who I invited. I emailed a few authors who are fairly successful and highly motivated. One has been writing books for years while working full-time. The other persevered for over four years before his writing career finally took off. It shows me they are both likely to stick around for the long haul.

2) Arrange a meeting with your accountability partner.

The next thing you want to do is to arrange a meeting with your new partner or partners. The idea behind this meeting is to set expectations and decide on key rules you will follow. Here is how you might like to organize the session:

Discuss what each of you expects to achieve from the partnership (i.e., what you're struggling with and how working together will help).

Decide how often you're going to meet and when. I recommend you talk in person or via phone or Skype, once a week at a specific agreed time.

Decide how long the partnership will last. I encourage you to send each other your 90-day goals and commit to working together for at least three months.

Determine how you will hold each other accountable. For instance, you could send each other your weekly goals on a set day and check whether you hit them during your weekly meeting.

Discuss what a typical session will look like. What will you do during the meeting? I encourage you to run your meetings as follows:

For a few minutes, discuss your week and what has been happening.

Put the focus on one of you. Let's say you start with your partner and switch to you later in the meeting.

Go through your partner's list and ask them how well they've been doing for each goal on the list.

Spend a couple of minutes reviewing their 90-day goals. Doing this weekly will ensure they focus on the right tasks rather than become distracted by non-related tasks. It will also allow them to adjust their effort if they fall behind schedule.

Ask them what went well, what they could have done better and what they want to do differently starting next week. You want your partner to focus on the things that are going well rather than dwelling on their setbacks. Then, you want them to look at what they can improve upon. Finally, you want them to commit to making changes to speed up their results.

Finally, ask them to share their goals for the coming week. Sharing goals increases the chances they'll achieve them. Make sure their goals follow the SMART paradigm.

Now, change roles. Have them repeat the process with you.

You want to split the session in two so you can give undivided attention to your partner and vice versa. Make sure you are both great listeners and avoid interrupting each other.

Wrap up with words of encouragement and acknowledge your respective progress, even the tiniest wins. This will improve your self-esteem and boost your motivation.

This is how to arrange a meeting effectively. Make sure you keep the meeting professional lest it turns into a casual chat between friends.

If you want to learn how to set 90-day goals in greater depth, I encourage you to check out The 12 Week Year by Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington.

Do you have your goals but are still overwhelmed about what to do next? If so, the Part IV will help. Read on.

Part IV

Developing ruthless focus

In this part, we're going to cover in depth how you can develop a ruthless focus that allows you to accomplish more in less time, while feeling less overwhelmed.

Does this sound like a good plan?

Good, let's get started.

1

Prioritizing

Do you spend most of your day working on key tasks that move you toward your long-term goals, or do you react to the day jumping from one "urgent" task to the next, without getting any serious work done?

To develop a ruthless focus, the first thing you should do is assess all the tasks you're working on each week to confirm whether they are truly necessary. To help you with this process, I've created a series of questions that will allow you to separate the key tasks from less important ones. Make sure you answer each question below, using your free action guide.

1) If the time you had available was reduced by 95% what task(s) would you still perform?

This question will help you identify the activities that truly matter. You can use it in any area of your life but, for now, let's focus on your work. Don't just ask this question lightly. Instead, imagine yourself having only five percent of the time you have now to make progress at work. Assuming you work a forty-hour week, five percent is only two hours.

So, what could you do in two hours that would have the biggest impact?

Keep asking yourself this question. It will train your mind to zoom in on key tasks while eliminating the non-essential ones.

2) If it were up to you, what activities or goals would you dump right away?

Right now, there may be many activities you don't want to do or goals you don't want to pursue. Yet, you may feel like you have no choice. For now, write them all down.

3) If you had to drop any activities or goals that aren't a resounding yes for you, which ones would you drop?

Go through each of the activities you engage in during a typical week and ask yourself whether you love doing it. If you hesitate even for one second, add it to the list of things to drop. Don't worry, it doesn't mean you necessarily need to drop it right away, or at all, just add it to the list.

4) What are you spending time doing merely because you're fooling yourself?

Why are you're doing all the things you know are useless? For instance, do you engage in certain activities as a way to avoid working on things that are truly important? We all do this from time to time. I call this, "disguised procrastination." Write down these activities as well.

5) What activities or projects can you put on hold for now?

You may be working on many different projects, but do you really need to focus on them all right now? Could you postpone some? Write down any project that isn't an absolute immediate priority and can be delayed.

One of my clients wanted to work on a cool project he's excited about but was already swamped. So, I asked him, "Do you need to focus on this project right now or will the opportunity still be there in three months?" Eventually, he decided to postpone the exciting project to give undivided attention to his key existing tasks.

You'll likely find yourself in the same situation. Remember, focus is one of your most important assets, so be ruthless.

6) If you could focus only on one thing in the coming twelve months and had to let go of everything else, albeit temporarily, which one would make the biggest impact in your life?

Let's imagine you could accomplish only one major goal in the next twelve months. Which one comes to mind? How excited are you about this goal? Could you commit to pursuing it for a whole year?

Most people pursue too many big goals at once. As a result, they scatter their focus and spread themselves too thin. I've rarely seen people being too

focused, but I often see people chasing too many simultaneous goals. We'll see in depth how to avoid this type of behavior in the section, Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome.

So, what single major goal could you focus on for the next twelve months?

7) What activities are generating uncertain or unconvincing results, while draining much of your energy?

If some activities drain your energy and have failed to generate concrete results—such as boosting your happiness, improving your health or generating more revenue—consider dropping them. Using your action guide, create a list of these activities.

8) Knowing what you know now, if you were to start all over again today, which current activities, projects or goals would you choose to drop?

This is called "zero-based thinking" and can be very effective both for both individuals and companies. When you've been doing something for too long, it becomes harder to stop doing it—even if you obviously should. For instance:

You may know that your current romantic relationship isn't working. You should move on, but you stay together.

You may understand you should dump some projects, but you're too invested in them to allow yourself to do so.

You may know you should discontinue a product and allocate your resources to a more profitable one, but you can't force yourself to do it.

What happened in the past is "sunk costs" and shouldn't influence the decisions you make today. Of course, this is easier said than done. Yet, you should ask yourself the question and, when necessary, make the difficult decisions.

So, what tasks could you stop doing that don't bring you the results you want?

By now, you should have a better idea of what tasks to focus on and what tasks to remove or delegate.

Remember: be ruthless!

Time is, perhaps, your most important asset—use it wisely.

* * *

Action step

Answer the eight questions above using your action guide

Approaching a task the correct way

Instead of taking the time to stop and think, many people jump head first into whatever they believe they must do. As a result, they often lose track of the big picture and either waste time on unnecessary things or approach tasks in an ineffective manner.

Below are a few steps you can follow to boost your productivity and ensure you work on the task in front of you as effectively as possible.

I've also added a one-page PDF you can keep next to you at any time. That way, you can move through each step and answer the corresponding questions before starting a new task. The more you practice, the more you'll be able to internalize each step, and the easier it will become. (See page 16 of your action guide)

Step 1. Prioritizing your task

Before you even start doing anything, ask yourself the following questions:

If I could do only one thing today, which task would have the most impact?

Is this task moving me closer to my main goal?

Do I really need to do it right now, or should I do it later?

You want to train yourself to think in terms of priorities and keep an eye on the big picture. Losing perspective and forgetting your overall strategy is the fastest way to waste time on unimportant tasks.

Step 2. Assessing the validity of your task

To ensure the task is something you actually need to undertake, ask yourself the following questions:

Do I really need to do this task?

Is right now the best time? What would happen if I delay it for a week? A month? Forever?

Do I work on it because I need to or because it makes me feel good? In short, am I working on this task as a way to escape from what I should really be doing?

There is nothing more unproductive than doing something you didn't need to do in the first place. Answering these questions can help you to avoid making such a mistake.

Step 3. Clarifying what needs to be done

Before working on a task, be certain you know exactly what is required. Thus, before starting any task, ask yourself:

What exactly do I need to do here?

What am I trying to accomplish?

What does the finished product look like?

You want to be specific. By knowing exactly what the output needs to be, you'll be able to optimize your approach and tackle the task effectively.

Step 4. Determining whether you should be the person doing it

You have strengths, but you also have weaknesses. Whenever possible, try to delegate any task someone else can do better, faster or more cheaply than you.

Ask yourself the following questions:

Is this task really worth my time?

Can someone else do it better than me? If so, can I ask for help?

What would happen if I simply remove/postpone this task?

Do I enjoy working on this task? Does it motivate me?

Little by little, you want to get into the habit of outsourcing everything you're not good at and focus only on the high-value tasks at which you excel. Your time is more valuable than money. So, learn to use money to save time.

Step 5. Finding out the most effective way to tackle that task

As Abraham Lincoln said, "Give me six hours to chop a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the ax."

Just taking a few minutes to think of the best way to approach the task can save you so much time. Ask yourself the following questions:

What tool(s) can I use, people can I ask or method can I rely on to complete that task as efficiently and effectively as possible?

What skill(s) could I learn or improve to help me complete this task faster in the future?

For instance, let's say you've been asked to create a presentation at work. Rather than creating it from scratch, why not reuse materials from a previous presentation? Always seek to utilize existing templates, methods or knowledge. Be smart. The last thing you want to do is reinvent the wheel.

To sum up, before tackling any task, take a few minutes to work out the best possible way to approach it. This habit alone will save you a lot of time and effort down the road.

Step 6. Batching the task with other similar tasks

Some tasks can be combined with other tasks that require the same type of effort or preparation. For instance, many YouTubers block one full day a week to record YouTube videos, as opposed to creating one video every day.

Ask yourself:

Can I batch this task with other similar tasks to boost my productivity?

Step 7. Automating/systemizing your task

Finally, you want to look for ways to automate or systemize your task, especially if it's a repetitive one.

Ask yourself:

Can I create templates to reuse every time I work on this task or similar ones? For instance, you could design templates for the specific emails, presentations or documents you need to create over and over.

Can I create a checklist? Checklists provide you with specific steps to follow, making it less likely you will become distracted.

By following these seven steps you can significantly enhance your focus and boost your productivity. Even though it may take time for you to internalize this process, once you do, it will become almost automatic.

3

Making the right domino fall

Many people set dozens of goals, hoping to accomplish more. However, a better way to boost productivity is to adopt a few momentum-building habits.

Momentum-building habits are those daily habits you use strategically to make consistent progress on all or most of your goals. They are the structure that makes your goals achievable. To find your momentum-building habit(s) ask yourself the following questions:

If you were to make one key decision today, which one would make it easier for you to accomplish most of your goals?

If you were to adopt one daily habit, starting today, which one would make it easier for you to accomplish most of your goals?

When I asked myself these questions, I came up with a surprisingly simple answer:

Go to bed early.

At the time, I was going to bed late and waking up late. However, as I'm most productive in the morning, I was wasting key hours of productivity.

If I could go to bed earlier, I would wake up earlier, which would give me more time to complete my morning ritual. This, in turn, would impact positively on my health, my energy levels and my ability to achieve goals in all areas of my life.

So, what did I do specifically? I committed to a 30-day morning ritual challenge that included going to bed at a certain time and waking up at a certain time for thirty days in a row.

This allowed me to start working on my most important tasks earlier in the morning which boosted my productivity and enhanced my self-esteem.

Now, what about you?

Which single decision or daily habit would allow you to build momentum and make it easier to accomplish most of your goals?

Perhaps it is meditating first thing in the morning. Perhaps it is spending a few minutes setting your goals every day. Perhaps it is creating a morning ritual, combining a few simple tasks that can positively impact your life.

Now, if you struggle to find your positive habit(s), ask yourself the following question:

If I failed to do one thing every day, which one would likely prevent me from achieving my short-term and long-term goals?

Then, make sure you do this same thing every day consistently.

I encourage you to commit to a 30-day morning ritual challenge. To do this, select one key habit and commit to completing it for thirty days. This one key habit will generate momentum and allow you to make progress on most of your goals without making you feel overwhelmed.

* * *

Action steps

Using your action guide:

Write down what one key habit would make it easier for you to accomplish most of your goals in the future.

Take on the 30-day morning ritual challenge.

4

The power of less

People often try to do too many things at once. As a result, they seldom achieve their most important goals. You can do anything, but you cannot do everything. You must make choices by focusing on a few things—at least in the short-term.

Now, what exactly does “doing less” mean?

For me, the concept means:

Having fewer goals, by focusing only on the major ones,

Doing fewer things, by removing most of the activities that do not improve my life,

Saying yes less often and standing up for myself rather than being a people pleaser, and

Having fewer distractions and staying focus on my task until it’s completed.

A. Having fewer goals

Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do (if not more). Without focus, you can spend years jumping from one exciting project to the next without ever making significant progress.

I know how frustrating this can be.

Would you rather focus on one exciting goal that will change your life and achieve it or would you prefer to go after multiple goals without making real progress on any of them?

The good news is, when you take a step back and adopt a long-term view, you'll realize you can achieve many of your goals. You might not be able to reach all of them in the short term, but you can focus on the most important one and achieve it within a pre-determined time. Then, you can work on the next important task. Keep doing this and you'll be amazed by what you can achieve in the longer term (say five or ten years). As the saying goes, we tend to overestimate what we can accomplish in one year, while underestimating what we can accomplish in ten years. How true is this!

So, are you trying to do too many things at once? What if you selected one exciting goal to focus on for the next 90 days, and another goal for the 90 days after that? Wouldn't that enhance your focus and allow you to make serious progress?

Now, look at the 90-day goals you set earlier. What goal(s) can you postpone or drop? What goal(s) do you want to concentrate on? I encourage

you to select one or perhaps two goals and focus only on them for the next 90 days.

Once you learn to tackle one big goal after the other, you'll find yourself accomplishing more while feeling less overwhelmed.

In addition, once you're finally able to achieve a major goal, you can replicate the method over and over with other goals. In the section, Developing a Mastery Mindset, we'll see how to develop the mastery mindset you need to achieve your major goals.

B. Removing things from your life

You have the right to remove things from your life. In fact, I recommend you do so. Perhaps you partake in activities you don't really enjoy. Perhaps you accepted a project you wanted to pass on. Perhaps you agreed to help someone, despite your already tight schedule.

To start removing non-essential tasks from your schedule, the first thing to do is adopt a new set of beliefs that support this goal. Below are a few key beliefs to internalize:

Belief #1 — The default answer is no.

Avoid saying yes to every request. Instead, make no your default answer. Remember, whenever you say yes to something you move your focus away from other things you could be doing with your time.

Belief #2 — Valuing my time is valuing myself.

Time is one of your most valuable assets. Don't give it to anybody just because they ask for it. Instead, protect it fiercely. You are valuable, and people should respect you and your time.

Belief #3— If someone needs my time, they must schedule an appointment.

Stop interrupting what you're doing to care for other people's needs. Don't answer your phone right away or respond to emails immediately. Instead, protect your time and avoid interruption at all cost. Adopt the mindset that if people want to talk to you, they need to schedule an appointment. Make yourself hard to reach. You don't give money to everyone who asks for it, do you? Don't do it with your time either. Remember, your time is more important than money.

Belief #4 — I always have enough time for whatever I'm committed to.

Stop saying you don't have enough time. If you're really committed to something, you'll find the time. And if you can't find the time, it's probably not that important to you.

Belief #5 — I schedule my priorities.

Schedule time every day to work on your top priorities. See it as an appointment with yourself and stick to it. You wouldn't miss an appointment with the doctor, would you? Then don't miss an appointment with yourself either.

The second thing to do is open yourself up to the possibility that you can always find a way to eliminate any unwanted activity. To do so, stop thinking you could never walk away from a group you belong to, say no to someone or dump your goals. You don't need to come up with a solution right now, but you do need to give yourself permission to alter your schedule drastically if you wish to. It's your time and it's your responsibility to use it the way you choose.

Remember, whenever you say "Yes" to something, you say "No" to something else. Consequently, for each decision you make there is an opportunity missed. For instance, by agreeing to join a project you're not interested in, you say no to a more exciting project or to extra time spent with your family.

To identify which task to remove from your life, you can use the zero-based thinking method we mentioned previously. To do so, simply list down all your weekly activities and ask yourself:

Knowing what I know now, would I still agree to start that activity today?

If your answer is no, you should probably stop doing it. You may not be willing or able to do this now, but you should start thinking of ways to eliminate this activity from your schedule.

* * *

Action step

- Using the action guide, write down a list of all activities you engage in during your typical week.

- Answer the following questions:

If had the chance to stop doing one specific thing, which one would lift the most pressure from your shoulders and give you the breath of fresh air you need?

▪What would it take for you to stop doing that thing?

C. Saying "No"

How often do you say "No"? Successful people say "No" to almost every offer they receive. Do you?

To focus on what matters and design the life you want, you must learn to say “No” over and over again. “No” must become your default answer.

How to say “No”

Below are a few tips to help you say “No” and regain control over your time.

Start small

If you’re a people pleaser, you can practice saying “No” to small things that bear little consequences. For instance, you might say “No” to a party invitation.

Stop over-justifying yourself

Do you try to justify yourself whenever you refuse a request? Here is the thing: you don’t actually need to justify yourself. When people ask you something, your default answer should be “No.” Therefore, you don’t need to come up with false excuses nobody would ever buy into. Instead, try telling the truth:

I’m sorry, but parties are not my thing, so I’m going to skip this time.

I’m sorry, but right now I’m entirely focused on a very important project.

I’m sorry, but I made a promise to my kids, and I won’t disappoint them.

You don’t need to over-apologize either. As I keep reminding you, time is one of your most precious assets, so why squander it? Why not value your time more and say “No” to requests that aren’t the best use of your time? It might feel uncomfortable to say “No” without offering a lame excuse, but I encourage you to try it. If you find it difficult to assert yourself, this exercise will help you immensely.

Practice saying “No”

If you struggle to say “No,” an effective way to work on your assertiveness is to use role play.

Role-playing has been shown to be effective in many different fields, especially sales. Anything you practice saying by yourself—or better, with someone else—becomes easier to say in “real” life.

To practice, envision a specific situation when you want to say “No.” Perhaps it is when one of your colleagues ask you for a favor. Or perhaps it is when a friend wants you to go to a party. Now, imagine what you would say in this specific situation. See yourself actually saying it. Practice saying it out loud. The simple fact of having rehearsed it in your mind will help you when the situation arises in reality.

The Say “No” Challenge

If you want bit more of a challenge, you can undertake the “Say ‘No’ Challenge.” For the next two weeks, try to say “No” to as many requests as possible and see what happens. It will likely feel uncomfortable—and it should. But sometimes it’s useful to overdo things especially if you tend to say “Yes” all the time. It will help you find the right balance.

D. Having fewer distractions

Doing less also means decluttering your mind by reducing the amount of information—and potential distractions—you’re exposed to. You don’t need to check your phone or emails every ten minutes or go on Facebook fifty times a day. These continual interruptions erode your ability to focus, and they kill your momentum. With each new interruption, you risk losing focus. For instance, whenever you check your emails you risk being distracted. Not to mention that, by repeating this type of behavior, it turns into a toxic habit—the habit of being distracted.

Remember this simple truth: You can either be focused or you can be distracted, but you can never be both at the same time.

Reducing external stimuli

According to a report from GWI (GlobalWebIndex), on average, internet users spend two hours and twenty-two minutes per day on social networking and messaging platforms. And, according to global tech and support company, Asurion, Americans check their phones eighty times a day on average (that’s once every eighteen minutes or so).

What about you? How much time do you spend on social media? How often do you check your phone?

Every time you become distracted, you give away a part of the mental bandwidth you have available that day. In other words, external stimulation kills your focus and costs you precious energy you'll never get back.

Now, let's see what you can do to reduce external stimuli and enhance your focus.

An effective way to limit external stimulation is to create a daily routine that includes what I call "activities with a strong potential for distraction." These activities could be things such as going on social media, checking your emails and looking at your phone. For me, activities with a strong potential for distraction are:

Checking my book sales,

Going on Facebook,

Monitoring my book ads,

Reading my emails, and

Watching a video on YouTube.

By batching these activities together, I can limit distractions and remain focused on my key tasks. A mere ten to fifteen minutes spent on these activities is usually not enough to move me out of a focused state.

Key characteristics of activities with a strong potential for distraction

To help you identify activities that can kill your focus, let's look at some of their key characteristics:

They are highly stimulating. You tend to become excited when you engage in them and are likely to get carried away. A good example is Facebook. Each time someone likes your post or notifications pop up, you receive a shot of dopamine, which makes you feel good. This can become quite addictive.

They are easy to indulge in and require little-to-no effort. You don't need to use your mental power to engage in these diverting activities, as is the case with emails and social media.

They offer numerous possibilities for distraction. Take YouTube, for instance. There are dozens of videos you could click on and many of them have intriguing titles. You're likely to click on one and waste time.

They give the illusion you're working. They give you the impression you're working when you aren't. Consequently, you have to be honest with yourself and assess whether the task is as important as you pretend it is.

They are activities you're passionate about. If you engage in an activity you are passionate about, you risk becoming excited about it and may forget—at least temporarily—about the main goals you promised to work on.

Now that you have a better understanding of what a highly distracting task looks like, it's your turn to identify what these tasks are for you.

* * *

Action step

Using the action guide, write down the list of activities that have a strong potential for distraction.

The importance of having a clear intent

Whenever you work on a task without clear intent, you risk becoming distracted. For instance, when I visit Facebook mindlessly, I often end up spending fifteen minutes going through my newsfeed. The same goes with emails and any other potentially distracting activities. This is why I encourage you to build the habit of setting clear intent before engaging in any activity. For instance:

If your intent is to reply to emails, don't open promotional emails no matter how enticing they look. Don't check the new exciting offer from your favorite blogger either. Instead, schedule a separate time during the day to do so.

If your intent is to use a particular app on your phone, avoid checking other apps.

Please note, the better you become at planning, the sharper your focus will become. This is because planning is nothing more than intent put in writing. Thus, I invite you to write down your daily and weekly goals in a notebook you keep open next to you. This will act as a reminder and will reduce your risk of becoming distracted during the day.

Additional tip:

You can also decide how much time you'll spend on a certain task. For instance, you can give yourself ten minutes, and only ten minutes, to check Facebook.

Going on a digital detox

An effective way to boost your focus is to do a digital detox. The idea is to remove—or dramatically reduce—the time you spend using digital devices. Sure, you may need to use the internet at work, but do you really need to check your emails or social media feeds twenty times a day? The more you can remove distractions and carve out uninterrupted blocks of time during your week, the better.

1) Avoid checking your digital devices first thing in the morning

One of the best ways to enhance your focus is to avoid checking your digital devices upon waking and implement a productive morning ritual

instead. Give yourself permission to check your emails or social media only after having completed your most important tasks. This habit alone will dramatically boost your productivity and strengthen your focus.

Imagine if you could consistently complete your most important task first thing in the morning? How would that affect your productivity? How much momentum would you be able to build during the day? And how much better would you feel?

2) Schedule blocks of time for your distraction

Another way you can reduce distractions is by batching non-productive activities together. For now, select the one or two activities that make up the big chunk of the time you waste every day. Now, batch them together and schedule them for a set time during the day. For instance, you could decide to check Facebook and Instagram for a maximum of twenty minutes every day at two o'clock. That would leave you enough time in the morning to make progress on your major tasks.

Just doing these two things—sticking to your morning ritual every day and scheduling your distractions—will go a long way to enhancing your focus. The key is to remain consistent over a long period of time. To start building this habit, I invite to do a 7-day digital detox. A week should be a long enough period for you to notice the benefits.

Note that some people engage in non-productive tasks many times throughout the day as a way to relax and reduce stress. This is what works for them and keep them motivated. Perhaps, you'll find that spending a

couple of minutes checking Facebook or your phone can brighten your day and give you an extra boost of motivation. Keep experimenting and see what works best for you.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, commit to a 7-day digital detox.

5

Scheduling everything

Most people overreact to their direct environment. They answer the phone as soon as it rings, respond to emails immediately, and jump to help whoever ask for their support. They're more than willing to abandon whatever they're working on for non-critical things. As Stephen R. Covey, the author of The 7 Habits of Highly-Effective People, would say, they get distracted by what's urgent while neglecting what's important.

Let's be clear. Most of the things that happen around you are not really all that important. And you certainly don't need to—nor should you—deal with them immediately. For instance, when it comes to communication, my mindset is that if people really need to contact me, they will find a way to do so. They'll even break my windows to get inside my house if necessary. Consequently, there is no need for me to answer the phone, respond to emails or open the door right away. There is no urgency here. If it's important people will leave a voice message.

I believe there are several reasons people tend to be so reactive.

They want to be liked. To do so, they say "Yes" to everything and make themselves available at all time.

They haven't developed the "make an appointment with me" habit. They let others interrupt them all day long instead of asking people to schedule an appointment.

They fail to understand how important their focus is. They don't fully realize how repeated interruptions take a huge toll on their overall productivity.

What about you? Are you running the day or is the day running you? And what can you do to reclaim some control over your day?

* * *

Action steps

Using your action guide, write down how you react in the following situations:

When receiving a phone call, and

When asked for help or asked a question.

Answer the questions:

If you perceived your time as the most valuable resource in the world, how would you act differently in your daily life?

What three things can you do to reclaim control over your day?

Limiting interruption

To focus better on the task at hand, it is important for you to limit interruptions as much as possible. Let's review two things you can do in this regard.

Schedule uninterrupted blocks of time. Schedule periods during which you will not be interrupted. How much of these blocks you'll be able to schedule during your week depends on the type of work you are doing and your situation at home. But even a few blocks will make a difference. Then, make sure no one will interrupt you. At work, inform your co-workers you do not want to be interrupted. Tell your boss it will make you more productive. If you can, book a room or go to a place where nobody will disturb you. At home, let your family members know they should not interrupt except in a case of emergency.

Don't react, schedule appointments. If someone at work comes to ask you a question, instead of helping them right away and losing your train of thought, agree to meet at a specific time that works for both of you. At home, if you're working on something, let your family members know you will help later in the day. Again, don't be afraid to tell people you're working on something important and that you'll help at a set time you both agree on. The more you can schedule your activities, the more you'll feel in control of your day.

Finally, remember that many things aren't as important as they initially seem to be. In most cases, there is no need to do anything about them right away. Instead, you need to focus on what is really important. Schedule key tasks every day and complete them first. Then, take care of the rest when necessary. You probably wouldn't give your money away to everyone who asks for it, so don't give away your time, either. Your time is not a free commodity available to everyone.

* * *

Action step

Starting this week, schedule at least one uninterrupted block of time to work on your most important task. Using your action guide, write what you will work on, for how long and when.

6

Focusing on one big project at a time

It's tempting to work on many different projects at once. It gives you the impression you accomplish a lot, makes it less likely you get bored, and tricks you into believing you're likely to be successful. You need to hustle as they say. No weekends, no vacations. Just work, work, work, right?

However, the truth is, you can work as hard as you want and never achieve any of your biggest goals. Many people try to do everything at once, failing to realize they can achieve anything but not everything. These people overestimate what they can do in one year and underestimate what they can do in ten. As a result, they're unable to tap into the power of undivided focus. In short, they spread themselves too thin, working on too many projects they'll leave unfinished for the most part.

Unfortunately, focus cannot be turned on and off at will. Entering deep focus requires time and energy. Whenever you switch from one task to another, there is a definite cost in terms of friction. I define friction here as the loss of mental energy that results from switching tasks. This switching can be physical—by navigating between different projects—or mental—by dividing your thoughts among several projects.

You have only so much mental energy available each day. Working on too many projects at once will scatter your focus and severely limit what you

can accomplish.

Successful people understand very well the value of focus as illustrated by the following anecdote.

When Bill Gates met Warren Buffet for the first time, Gates's mother, the host of the dinner, asked everyone around the table to identify what they believed was the single most important factor in their success. Both Gates and Buffet gave the same answer. Can you guess what it was?

Focus.

They clearly understood that focus is one of their most precious assets and, to ensure their focus, they would need to protect themselves from distraction or interruption.

Now, you may still think successful people got where they are because they work on many things simultaneously. Consider Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin. Currently, he manages over 400 companies. Look at Brendon Burchard who is a multiple-time New York Times best-selling author, high-performance coach and online marketer. From this perspective, it seems like these two successful people are doing many things at once. However, this is not the way they started. These entrepreneurs started with one thing and stuck to it until they achieved their first major breakthrough. Richard Branson didn't run 400 companies from the start. He first created Virgin Records in 1972, before venturing into other businesses. Brendon Burchard didn't try to become a writer, coach and online marketer all at

once. He first had a breakthrough as a writer, which allowed him to branch out and do other things.

In fact, you will seldom see entrepreneurs successfully creating multiple businesses at once—unless they have previous experience or considerable capital at their disposal. They usually stick to one business until they succeed and then move on to other ventures using the money they made to:

Delegate and/or automate their current business,

Make necessary investments in their new ventures, and/or

Hire a team to delegate some of their responsibilities.

The lesson here is that you must first focus on having a breakthrough before starting all the other cool projects you have in mind. Most people have many projects or ideas they would like to give their focus and energy to. However, like time, focus is a scarce resource and must be invested wisely.

People who try to do everything tend to achieve nothing of real value. Consequently, to achieve significant results long term, focus on one major project at a time until you succeed. Then, and only then, move on to the next project and repeat the cycle. This is how you'll likely achieve extraordinary results, not by trying to do everything at once.

In Part V, Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome, we'll see in more depth what you can do to make sure you stick to your key project and avoid being distracting by all the opportunities out there.

You can do anything but not everything

Do you have too many goals? Do you find it difficult to select one area to focus on?

If so, you may have started a whole bunch of projects without achieving the results you wanted. Or perhaps you feel so confused that you haven't pursued any of the major projects you want to become involved with.

For instance, perhaps you want to pursue a career in several different fields and can't decide which one to choose. Or you may have too many different business ideas and can't pick one.

Let's say you want to start three businesses that we'll call Businesses A, B and C. Now, you can either work on all three at once and hustle like crazy, or you can select one, focus on it for a set amount of time—until you get the desired results—and then move on to the next one. Although it may sound counterintuitive, in most cases, the second approach generates far better results than the first in the long term.

Let's see why this is the case.

The importance of momentum

Success is not linear. This means you need to apply enough pressure to generate the momentum needed for the achievement of your goal(s). If you fail to do so, you won't build enough momentum and your goal:

Won't be achieved,

Will only be partially achieved, or

Will be achieved but will require far more time.

When you focus only on one major business—Business A for instance—you can apply tremendous pressure and stick to that business until you achieve good results. On the other hand, each time you work on multiple business ventures, you create additional friction which manifests as follows:

Switching cost. Switching back and forth between Business A and Business B costs you time and energy, scattering your focus.

Loss of momentum. With less time to work on Business A, you can't make as much progress. Not to mention you might be unable to carve out long blocks of time. And dedicating only fifteen minutes at a time to your business is often less effective than working on it for three consecutive hours.

Reduction of the mental energy available. When you focus only on Business A, your mind becomes filled with that business. You will think about it more often and come up with more ideas to move forward. As a result, it becomes easier to keep a high level of motivation and maintain momentum over time. But when you add Business B, Business C and so on, the mental energy you can exert on one particular business becomes severely restricted.

In short, the amount of energy you have available doesn't shrink in proportion to the number of business, projects or goals you focus on. It actually shrinks exponentially as each new project creates additional friction, further scattering your focus.

Thus, having fewer projects to focus on means you have more energy, which enables you to achieve better results in less time. It also allows you to maintain a high level of motivation. This is why it is important for you to focus on as few projects as possible. Now, it doesn't mean you need to drop Businesses B and C altogether. It simply means you're better off focusing on Business A first, before moving on to the other businesses. In most cases, this counterintuitive approach will enable you to achieve far better results in the long term.

Picking the right project

If you struggle to identify what specific project you should focus on right now, I encourage you to complete the exercise below.

Write down all the projects that fall into the following two categories:

Projects you've been dabbling with, and

Projects you've been considering starting one day but haven't yet.

Now, ask yourself the following questions:

If I had to stick to only one project with no guarantee I could ever work on any other project on my list, which one would I pursue? And why?

Put differently, which project will you regret the most not having completed?

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all and 10 being extremely, how excited am I about each individual project?

The project you're the most excited about is the one you're the most likely to take consistent action on and to generate the best results with.

On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being extremely, how confident I am in my ability to follow through and complete each project?

The more confident you are in your ability to achieve your goals, the more likely you are to move forward instead of procrastinating and doubting yourself. If you're passionate about a certain project but don't feel confident you can be successful, break it down into smaller milestones that you feel confident you can achieve.

When completed successfully, which project would make it easier to complete all your other projects?

There might be one project that acts as a domino by:

Allowing you to develop the confidence you need to achieve other projects,

Giving you the skills necessary to complete other projects,

Giving you access to a network of people you can rely on in the future, and so on.

Which project will bring me the most joy?

Forget about other people's definition of success and happiness and ask yourself with total honesty, which project is likely to bring you the most joy and fulfillment.

Which project aligns the closest with my values, personality and vision?

At an intuitive level, which project seems like the best fit? What can you see yourself doing for years? You can ask people around you for advice, but in the end, you have to be honest yourself and make sure you focus on projects closely aligned with your values, your personality and your overall vision.

Finally, realize that you'll always have to make some trade-offs. The questions above will help ensure you're making the right ones.

Additional tip:

Talk to people who have what you want. Whether you want to lose weight, change your career or create your own business, there are many people out there who have already done the same thing. Seek them out. This will allow you to have a more realistic picture. Sometimes, reality can be quite different from what you thought. For instance, if you're unsure which career to pursue, interview one or two people in each of your fields of interest. Ask them what the pros and cons of their jobs are. What do they like the most and what do they hate?

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, answer the questions above to help you identify the major project to focus on.

7

Increasing your energy

Many people have difficulty retaining their focus and look for tips to become more productive. However, the problem is often more fundamental and cannot be solved with simple tips.

A. Getting the basics right

In most cases, people would be more productive if they improved their diet, exercised more regularly and went to bed early. Nothing new here. Eating well, taking exercise and sleeping properly are part of these things you already know you should be doing.

But are you really eating, exercising and sleeping well consistently every day?

It is incredibly difficult to stay focused when your fundamentals are weak. So be honest, ask with yourself:

Am I eating as well as I could be?

Am I sleeping enough or am I going to bed too late?

Am I exercising regularly and consistently?

For now, just focus on one of these things. If you were to improve just one of these three, which would make the biggest difference in your life? Which one would boost your energy the most, allowing you to become more productive?

B. Managing your energy

The amount of energy you have available varies throughout the day. For many people, their energy levels peak in the morning. What about you? Do you know when you have the most energy?

You should work on your most important task when your energy levels are at their peak. For instance, I always have more energy in the morning, so I use this time to create content. This book is one example, but it could also be writing emails for my subscribers or shooting videos for an online course. On the other hand, I schedule activities that require less focus—such as running promotional campaigns—during the afternoon.

C. Taking a break

Are you working non-stop from morning to night, without taking enough breaks? After all, you need to hustle, right?

While you may believe that every minute counts and the fewer breaks you take, the more productive you will be, studies actually show this is not the case. In fact, high-achievers take regular breaks as part of their strategy to perform at the highest level possible. For example, Brendon Burchard, the best-selling author of High-Performance Habits, takes breaks very seriously and recommends his clients take a break from work every 45-60 minutes. "If your butt lands in a chair, then set a fifty-minute timer on your phone or computer. At fifty minutes, no matter what you're working on, stand up, move, breathe, set an intention and then return to work."

What about you? How often should you take your breaks? Below are the techniques considered to be the most effective:

Every 75-90 minutes:

Robert Pozen, author of Extreme Productivity: Boost Your Results, Reduce Your Hours, encourages people to take a break every 75 to 90 minutes. This is because it is difficult to remain focused for more than ninety consecutive minutes.

Every 52 minutes:

The startup, Draugiem Group, ran an experiment and found that the most productive people took frequent breaks, working fifty-two minutes and taking seventeen-minute rests. While they may seem like long rest breaks, in reality, if you can remain focused for fifty-two minutes, you will be more effective at work, and your breaks will be well-deserved.

Every 25 minutes:

This is called the Pomodoro technique. The idea is to work twenty-five minutes and take five-minute breaks every half hour.

Which method should you use? This depends. The only way to know which one works best for you is to try them all out. I encourage you to test each method for a week and see which one works best for you. Note that it may also depend on the tasks you perform. For instance, for a task that requires a great deal of creativity, perhaps working in blocks of 75 to 90 minutes might be best as it will give you more time to enter the "flow." Alternatively, for tasks that require minimal concentration, working in blocks of twenty-five minutes might be more effective.

* * *

Action step

Referring to your action guide, experiment with the different work techniques and choose the one that works best for you.

Part V

Destroying the Shiny Object Syndrome

Do you keep jumping from one project to another without ever achieving anything significant?

In this section, we'll see why you keep chasing the next new thing. We'll also discuss what you can do to overcome this tendency and focus on one thing until you achieve results.

I believe the ability to stay focused on one project consistently over the long term is one of the keys to achieving your goals.

We'll use the following definition for what is known as Shiny Object Syndrome:

Abandoning or neglecting something you're working on to chase something else that looks more exciting or promising.

1

Why you keep chasing the next big thing

Today, it has never been easier to find information. With only a few clicks you have access to billions of books and millions of videos, and you can learn a wide variety of things, from how to make your own natural toothpaste to how to become a CIA agent.

Every single day, thousands of new products enter the market, each promising you something you may or may not want, whether it is making more money, losing weight or finding your soulmate. There are hundreds of diets and thousands of methods to earn money online. Yet, despite all the information available, people often struggle to achieve the results they want.

Perhaps you recognize yourself in some of the situations below:

You have tried countless diets but never managed to lose weight or maintain your ideal weight for long.

Despite countless attempts, you failed to adopt a consistent exercise routine.

You spent years trying to make money online without much success.

You've studied a foreign language for months but haven't made much progress.

Now, why is that? Is it because there aren't any products that actually work?

No.

If you find yourself jumping from one project to another without achieving any significant results, it says something about you. Ask yourself what the constant is here. Is it the products you buy, the courses you take or the diets you try?

No.

You fail because the methods you try keep changing. What doesn't change is you.

You are the constant and you are taking yourself with you from product to product and course to course. You are repeating the same pattern over and over again and, as long as you keep doing this, you'll never achieve the results you want.

Now, let's see what this pattern is and how it works. More importantly, let's see what you can do to change it.

To do so, first, let's review some of the main reasons you may fall for the Shiny Object Syndrome.

1) You believe in a so-called "magic pill"

When you listen to marketers, everything seems easy. You're supposed to lose thirty pounds without effort, become wealthy in thirty days or create a profitable business within one week. The underlying assumption is that things should be easy and that if you fail, it's your fault.

However, in truth, there is no such thing as overnight success. Any significant goal you seek to achieve will take time and effort, and, if it doesn't, it's probably not a truly valuable goal in the first place. If achieving your goals takes time, it's actually a good thing.

The idea that you need to find a magic pill can hamper your progress. There is no magic pill. For the most part, the magic ingredient is you!

You have to make things work.

Did you know the diet industry is a multi-billion-dollar sector? Why is this? Because people keep trying different diets, hoping to find one that finally works. Clever marketers take advantage of this situation by selling different diet programs to the same people over and over.

Now, is it possible that none of these diets work? Technically, yes. However, I doubt that is the case. There are probably people who managed to lose a lot of weight with any of these diets—whether they maintain the weight loss is another matter.

The point is, what matters the most is not the information you receive, it's what you do with it. Once you understand how to use the information you have effectively, you can achieve results even with average quality information. Conversely, if you fail to develop the proper mindset, none of the programs will work for you. We'll talk in depth about what the correct mindset is in the section, Developing a Mastery Mindset.

You often hear people say they have great ideas. However, like information, ideas are only valuable when you can implement them successfully in the real world. Anyone can come up with a decent business idea that would work, yet very few people go on to execute it successfully.

Remember this: your ability to execute is key. In fact, this is far more important than the quality and quantity of the ideas or information you have. When you put into practice what you learn consistently over a long period of time, things will start changing for you. Of this, I am absolutely certain.

2) You get high on the initial excitement

Starting something new can be exciting. You may already see yourself making truckloads of money or developing a six-pack from your work in the gym.

However, after a few weeks or months, the initial excitement will start to wear off as you realize you haven't made as much progress as you hoped. Although you worked hard every day, the results you initially envisioned have failed to materialize. You thought you would make money with your online business but haven't made any. You've been to the gym for a few weeks, but the six-pack is nowhere to be seen.

Then, you start doubting. Perhaps that niche you chose for your business isn't the right one. Perhaps the workout plan from this world-famous fitness coach doesn't work for you. Then you hear about a new niche that looks promising. It seems to require less work and the potential for making money is even greater. Or you hear about a new body workout that seems to be working wonders. Everybody is talking about it over the internet. Perhaps you should try it out.

Then, what do you do? You jump ship, believing the grass is greener on the other side. You forget about the months you spent working on your business venture and start a new one in the hottest new niche. You abandon your current workout plan for the trendy new one, hoping it will be more effective.

Guess what? You're now on a new high. You're excited to start something and can already see yourself making big money or having the perfect body. You feel good for a few weeks or months but what do you think happens next?

As things don't work as planned, you start feeling discouraged. And you keep repeating this same cycle over and over again, never getting anywhere,

never succeeding.

You need to understand the different phases people go through as they work on a challenging new goal. The initial excitement will not, and cannot, last forever. At some point, it will wear off. This is when most people give up or jump ship, and this is exactly when you must keep going. Think about it this way. When you set a new exciting goal, do you ever say to yourself, "I'm going to work on this goal for a while just to give up when the going gets tough the same way everybody else does?" I doubt it very much. If this were the case, you wouldn't have started in the first place, would you?

The magic happens when you sustain your effort consistently after the initial excitement wears off. If you persevere for long enough, you'll start seeing results and your motivation will return. Bear in mind that the process we call "success" is never linear. It consists of ups and downs. Although it may look as though you're going from setback to setback, you may very well wake up one day to realize you're on track to achieving all your goals.

I'm now making a living from my writing and may look successful to the outside observer. However, if you had been observing what I was doing every day for the past four years, you wouldn't have seen many signs of success. You would have seen a guy losing money each month, writing books very few people read. In fact, it's only after I published my seventh book that I started seeing decent results. Suddenly, I went from making $20 a day to selling $80 a day. Right before having this small breakthrough, I was wondering whether I should change my strategy and perhaps do something else.

Remember, you take yourself with you to every goal you choose to pursue. You are the constant, and when you decide on something you want to

achieve, you must be the one thing that stays constant. You must remain consistent until you see tangible results. Otherwise, you'll keep jumping from one project to another, never achieving anything of real personal value.

If you can stay consistent and develop a strong mindset, you can achieve almost anything you want.

3) You run away from your fears

Sometimes, you would rather give up prematurely than going all the way and fail. Why? It's because you're afraid to discover you aren't as good as you imagined. As long as you refuse to give your best, you don't need to find out the truth about yourself. You can tell yourself the program isn't working or that, if you had really wanted to, you could have achieved your goals. But is it true?

Many people spend their life doing just this. These people never stick to anything long enough to find out what they are capable of achieving. By giving up, they reinforce the idea something is wrong with them. Worse still, they often become deeply frustrated and envious of other people's success. And while they keep saying they could achieve similar results as the people they look up to, they never will.

The truth is, it's okay to fail all the way. In fact, it is often necessary. Failure is only temporary. If you write a book and reviews are terrible, it's not the end of the world. At least you went all the way and learned the process. Now, you can ask for feedback and improve your book, or write a new one.

If you start a new job and can't seem to do anything right, it's okay. You can always learn, grow and improve.

The bottom line is that, from time to time, you will fail. And when you do, you must learn from your mistakes. If you keep trying to avoid failures, you'll never discover your true capabilities.

4) You believe you'll get better results next time

When you fail to achieve the results you want, you tend to seek better solutions. Sometimes, this is a smart move but not necessarily so. If you've been trying several diets but have failed to lose weight, the problem is probably not the different diets. If you've been experimenting with dozens of ways to make money online but haven't yet made any, the issue is likely not the products or niches. The problem is you or, more specifically, your mindset and approach to your goals—nothing is wrong with you, per se.

The point is, if you believe you'll get better results by going where the grass seems greener, it's probably not going to happen. As the consultant, Sam Oven puts it, "The grass isn't greener on the other side, the grass is greener where you water it." If you keep jumping from one project to another without getting results, what makes you think you will succeed this time? Often, all you need is to do is stay on your plot and keep watering your grass.

5) You want to hedge your bets

You may be thinking, “If I focus only on one thing what will happen if I fail?” As a result, you’d rather work on a few things at the same time, hoping at least one of them will work. After all, the more you take on, the more likely you are to succeed, right?

Wrong.

This is so often not the case.

If you don’t dive deep enough into one thing, you’ll probably never develop the knowledge or skills you need to achieve significant results. I like to use online businesses as an example, because it’s the ultimate trap for people suffering from the Shiny Object Syndrome, and it’s what I know best.

Let’s say your goal is to create an online business and you want to hedge your bets. You could:

Start a YouTube channel,

Create a blog,

Pursue affiliate marketing,

Sell physical products on Amazon, and

Offer coaching.

Superficially, this may seem like a great strategy, but it isn't. Unless you have prior experience of building businesses, it's unlikely you'll gain enough traction by focusing on all these different things at once. Even if you achieve modest success with one of your ventures, you would likely have obtained better results by eliminating a big chunk of your activities.

Therefore, if you want to be a YouTuber, focus on that. Building a successful YouTube channel alone will take you a great deal of time and competition is fierce.

If you want to sell physical products on Amazon, focus on that. There are over one million sellers on Amazon, so you need to hone your craft to build a successful business.

If you want to build a coaching business, focus on that. You need to build your expertise, find clients and learn how to convince them to hire you as a coach. There is a heck of a lot of work involved.

Here's the bottom line. If you're not spending a major part of your time on one thing, you'll very likely get nowhere. And, while hedging your bets might sound like a good strategy, it often isn't. It's usually far more effective to find one thing you have an interest in and commit to doing it until you get results. Then, and only then, you can move on to the next exciting goal on your list and repeat the process.

In my book, The One Goal, I explained how and why I set a goal of writing books consistently until April 18th, 2020 (my 35th birthday). I specifically set this goal to avoid giving up or falling for the Shiny Object Syndrome.

On many occasions, I considered diversifying my activities by doing more coaching, creating online courses, et cetera. However, each time, I dismissed the idea of diversifying and refocused on my one goal. I needed a bigger breakthrough, and I knew it could only come from staying focused on my one major goal.

At the time, I had no idea this commitment would end up being so useful. But since I published that first book, I've sold tens of thousands of volumes. In fact, as time passes, I've started doing fewer and fewer things to add even more focus on my one goal.

For instance, these days as I'm writing this book, I:

Barely use social media,

Almost never tweet,

Don't do Facebook Live,

Stopped doing YouTube videos for the most part,

Don't write articles on my blog anymore (nor do I write guest posts),

Don't seek foreign deals for my books,

Do very few podcast interviews,

Don't organize seminars/webinars,

Do very little networking, and

Spend very little time coaching people.

This is not to say that these things don't work or that I will never focus on any of them in the future but, for now, I focus mainly on one thing:

Writing more books.

What about you? Which single goal are you going to focus on? What will you stop doing?

As I said, there is no magic pill.

Everything of value requires time and effort and, more importantly, the proper mindset and approach. As you change your mindset and avoid the five pitfalls mentioned above, you'll discover that everything will change for you in the long term.

Remember, if others can lose weight, build a successful business or design their dream career, so can you.

"If others can, I can."

This is the mantra I've been telling myself for the past few years.

Now, success might not happen as quickly as you would like it to. It might require more time and effort than you initially imagined, and you might not always feel motivated but, with determination and patience, you can make it happen.

In the section, Developing a Mastery Mindset, we'll see how you can develop the proper mindset to achieve your goals long term.

Now, let's see in more depth how the Shiny Object Syndrome really works.

* * *

Action steps

Using your action guide:

Rate yourself for each of the five pitfalls mentioned above, and

Write down at least one goal you failed to achieve in the past twelve months. Then, ask yourself if you fell for one of the five pitfalls.

2

Overcoming the Shiny Object Syndrome

We've seen that Shiny Object Syndrome is the habit of jumping from one project to another without focusing long enough to achieve the desired outcome. What does "jumping from one thing to another" actually mean?

To help you understand how it works against you, I will provide you with concrete examples in various areas. This way, you'll be able to identify how the Shiny Object Syndrome manifests in your own life.

I believe we can differentiate four types of scenarios for which Shiny Object Syndrome applies. These are:

Jumping from one goal to another.

Jumping from one course to another (with the same ultimate goal).

Jumping from one tactic to another.

Jumping from one type of training material to another.

Now, let's review each of these in greater detail.

1) Jumping from one goal to another

This is the classic example of the Shiny Object Syndrome where you jump from one opportunity to another. One example would be:

Starting a blog, giving up on blogging to create a YouTube channel, then abandoning your YouTube channel to sell physical products on Amazon. And so on.

Note that, in addition to jumping from one goal to another, you may also be pursuing many goals at once. Here, for instance, you may keep blogging while creating YouTube videos and selling products on Amazon. This is usually an ineffective strategy as it blunts your focus.

Here is another example:

You join a gym for a couple of months, then start running for a couple of weeks, then join a yoga class for three months. Finally, you buy some home gym equipment you use only a few times before moving on to the next exciting exercise fad.

As you can imagine, this type of behavior will never allow you to improve your health and fitness the way you want.

Now, it is not to say you should always stick to the first thing you try. When unsure of what to do, it might be useful to explore different opportunities and test things out. However, you must do so consciously. Then, once you find something you really enjoy, consider focusing on it. Also, when you jump to the next thing, make sure it is for the right reasons. Avoid changing just because:

You don't get results fast enough with your current regime or plan,

It seems easier than what you currently do,

You believe you can make more money that way,

A guy from a webinar pitches you and you feel all excited, and/or

It's trendy and everybody is talking about it.

However, you might consider "jumping" to something else if:

You have a real passion for it and can see yourself doing it for many years to come,

You're willing to commit to doing it consistently, and

It feels right and aligns well with your beliefs, values and vision.

2) Jumping from one course to another (with the same ultimate goal)

Let's say you decided to focus on building a YouTube channel and are committed to doing so for the next few years. That's wonderful, but it doesn't mean you shouldn't still be concerned with Shiny Object Syndrome.

Now you're pumped up, learning as much as you can about YouTube. You watch dozens of tutorials on how to build a profitable YouTube channel, you check out blogs and look for free courses, you may even buy high-quality courses, and that's great.

But now you start feeling overwhelmed. One YouTuber suggests you do one thing, while another encourages you to do the opposite. What are you supposed to do?

Confused, you feel stuck and less motivated to build your YouTube channel. As a result, you may decide to give up.

Many people face the same issue. To overcome it and maintain strong focus, you must limit the amount of contradictory information you absorb. You need to make sure you travel in one clear direction and don't change direction every day as you learn something new that might be worth trying. This will only scatter your focus and slow your progress.

To succeed over the longer term, you need to identify the right course of action for you and stick to it, while discarding everything else—at least for the time being. Then, you must trust the method, course or approach you chose. Otherwise, you risk looking for the next revolutionary thing and end

up jumping from one promising method to another. And, as discussed, we know this type of behavior only leads to poor results.

Here is another example:

Jumping from one diet to another without losing weight or improving your health.

Again, if you keep searching online for the right information, you'll find everything and its opposite, and you will be left feeling confused and overwhelmed. This will scatter your focus and eventually kill your motivation. In this situation, you need to find the right course or approach and stick to it until you obtain at least a few positive results.

In the section, How to Select the Right Course, we'll see how to find the right information in depth, to help you move toward your goals effectively and efficiently.

3) Jumping from one tactic to another

Another common mistake people make is to jump from one tactic to another without developing a clear strategy first. They incorrectly believe that a change in tactics will enable them to achieve their goals. However, in reality, tactics work only as part of a bigger strategy and have a limited impact in and of themselves.

For instance, if your only goal is to make money online, you risk jumping from one tactic to another. Alternatively, you'll gather a few tactics here and there and try to bundle them together, hoping for the best.

This process rarely, if ever, works.

If you find yourself in this specific situation, take a step back and review your overall strategy. What are your tactics based on? Are they part of a coherent system? If so, what's the underlying strategy?

Furthermore, your strategy is only one piece of the puzzle. You also need strong foundations to determine what strategy to choose in the first place. Solid foundations contain the following components:

Your self-awareness. This means how much you know yourself, your strengths, abilities, weaknesses, purpose, values, et cetera. A lack of self-awareness creates a misalignment between who you are and what you do. As a result, you will lack motivation, purpose or clarity and will likely fail in your endeavors. If necessary, revisit Part II: Knowing What You Want.

Your mindset. This is related to how much confidence, grit or discipline you have cultivated. Without a powerful mindset, you'll doubt yourself, fail to apply what you learn consistently and eventually give up—or achieve mediocre results. To learn how to cultivate a powerful mindset refer to the section Developing a Mastery Mindset.

Your knowledge. This is the knowledge you have overall. If you lack the knowledge required to reach your goal, you may need more time to achieve the results you desire.

Your experience. This is the amount of experience you have related to your goal. Without previous experience, you'll have nothing similar to refer to, and you will have a harder time accomplishing your goal.

Based on the above components, you can now create an effective strategy to reach your goal. A clear strategy will prevent you from jumping from one tactic to the next without achieving tangible results.

Have you ever wondered why two people can receive the same exact information, and one becomes very successful while the other fails to obtain positive results? This is because one has a clear strategy based on solid foundations, while the other doesn't.

4) Jumping from one type of training material to another

Do you look for all the information available out there to help you achieve your goals? Is it possible this harms you more than it helps?

In truth, it is very easy to drown in the sea of information available today. On one hand, we're blessed with all the information we will ever need to achieve our goals, but on the other hand, we feel overwhelmed, not knowing where to start or how to proceed.

Sound familiar?

If so, let's see how you can use the information available to you effectively and without feeling overwhelmed. Keep in mind that your ability to make the most of the vast amount of information out there is key to achieving anything you want.

* * *

Action step

Come up with at least one example from your personal life for each of the four scenarios mentioned above and write it down in your action guide.

3

Assessing the value of information

Not all information is equally valid. The first thing to do is to make sure you know exactly what you're trying to accomplish. This will determine the type of information you must look for.

For instance, if you only need a quick answer to a simple question, Google is your friend. However, if you want to achieve a major goal that will transform your life, you need the highest quality information possible.

A. The hierarchy of information

Roughly speaking, information can be sorted as follows (from low quality to high quality):

Blogs/articles/YouTube videos. They provide tips but often remain superficial or lack structure, making it difficult to achieve long-term results with the information presented.

Free courses. They offer a little bit of information and in a more structured way.

Books. They can offer in-depth information but are only really effective when the reader completes the recommended exercises.

Paid courses. They offer in-depth information in a well-structured way increasing the odds the students will take action. Also, because people pay for them, they'll tend to act on what they learn more diligently eager to make the most of their investment and achieve the results they desire.

High-end courses. They can offer in-depth, high-quality information in a highly-structured way. They can also provide group coaching sessions and other activities that strengthen commitment and accountability. They encourage people to take serious action due to the higher entry price.

Mentoring. This allows students to absorb years of knowledge through face-to-face interaction with a highly experienced tutor. Benefits include: intense shortening of the learning curve, implementation of a highly effective strategy and a powerful shift in the student's mindset.

Mastermind groups. They allow students to learn from highly successful people with similar goals and extensive knowledge. They foster accountability and boost motivation. Mastermind groups created by top performers in their industry can be extremely expensive, but nothing prevents you from creating one for free.

One-on-one coaching. This allows students to work individually with an expert and received instant feedback as well as highly customized advice. These sessions offer access to the best strategy out there and create a strong accountability.

Note that this categorization is far from perfect. You may be able to find extremely high-quality articles. Or you may find free courses that are better than paid courses, and so on.

Why is it important to understand the value of the information you consume? Because it will allow you to gather the right information for the right goal and save you a great deal of time and effort along the way.

As a rule of thumb, the higher the level of success you want to reach, the higher the quality of the information you consume must be.

Do you think the most successful people on earth spend their day reading blogs and articles to find solutions to their problems? No. They work with the best coaches in the world, join mastermind groups and have mentors. This is because they understand the hierarchy of information and value high-quality information above all.

Now, let's see how to use information effectively to maximize the chances of achieving your goals and to do it as quickly as possible.

B. How to use information effectively

Often, the first thing we do is to hop on the internet in search of the correct information.

Big mistake!

It is critical to ask yourself the right questions before jumping on the internet and drowning in an ocean of information. A poor strategy and a

lack of planning can lead you to waste a great deal of time, money and energy down the line.

Below are some questions you can ask yourself (in order):

1) What exactly I am trying to achieve?

Without a clear strategy and a specific goal, it's impossible to identify the information you actually need. So, what results are you trying to obtain and what information do you need to get there?

2) Has anyone I know achieved this goal? Does anyone I know have the right information or know someone who does?

If you know anyone who can help you, start there. It will save you the hassle of looking for the right information and prevent you from wasting time. Before looking for information on my own, I always try to think of people who can help me. By doing so, I'm more likely to access the right information and, as a result, learn more effectively.

3) To achieve the results I want, who can I pay to help me find the information I need?

Successful people don't spend hours looking for free tutorials or articles, they hire experts or buy the best step-by-step course available. They simply

don’t have the time to put pieces of the puzzle together from multiple sources of information.

On the other hand, people who struggle with their goals often spend hours trying to obtain free information. Not only do they waste time in the process, they also become overwhelmed and heavily confused. As a result, they lose momentum and start doubting their ability to achieve their goals.

In truth, there is no such thing as “free” information. So-called free information comes at a cost, such as:

Time wasting,

Confusion,

The risk of becoming overwhelmed,

Having to wade through low-quality information,

The absence of commitment, and so on.

You might argue that you cannot afford to hire a coach or buy a course, and I get that. However, you need to understand how successful people think. For them, time is their most important asset. The last thing they want to do is to reinvent the wheel and try to figure out everything for themselves. That would be silly. They actually want to shorten their learning curve so they can travel from Point A to Point B as quickly as possible. And to do so, they need access to the best information available. Which of the following two options do you prefer?

Working directly with a world-class expert in the field you're studying (or buying their course), or

Spending months or years trying to figure things out on your own?

As a rule of thumb, you should always try to find the best information possible and think of ways to maximize your chances of achieving your goals—and fast.

If you can work with a coach or join a mastermind group, I recommend you do so.

4) What course can I buy to save time and maximize the chances of obtaining the information I need?

You cannot always spend thousands of dollars on training courses, coaching or masterminds. However, there are situations in which you might want to spend your hard-earned money to secure the optimal information. This is the case for every one of your major goals.

For instance, if you want to design your dream career, you'll likely need to invest money in your education. Let's say you want to become a business coach. In this case, you might need to buy a training program. You might also want to purchase a course that helps you market yourself better. If you want to be a full-time writer, you might want to invest in writing software or programs that teach you how to build your audience or promote your books effectively. The same goes for other areas of your life, such as your relationships, health or finances.

I often hesitate before buying any software or course but then I ask myself:

If I'm really committed to becoming a 6-figure author, can I afford not to invest in that tool?

What's the upside of buying it and what's the cost if I don't? For example, how much time and effort can it save me?

You will find more on this in the section, How to Select the Right Course.

I invite you to invest in yourself, even if it's a real financial stretch—and it should be. I've never seen successful people who have failed to invest in their own education. In fact, one of the teachers I had in business school spent tens of thousands of dollars on her education every year, and she was already hugely successful and knowledgeable in her field.

Sure, you will sometimes buy products or services that aren't as effective as you'd hoped, but if you adopt a mastery mindset—we'll see how later—you will greatly benefit from most of the programs you invest in.

5) What are one or two of the best books ever written on the topic I want to learn about? And who might know what these books are?

For just a few dollars, you can read books from experts who've spent years studying the topic you are trying to learn about. These could be books on

nutrition, wealth and business creation, strategy or child education. Now, wouldn't it make sense to read these books, if doing so can save you time?

To sum up, avoid jumping on Google immediately. Always think of the fastest and most effective way to acquire the information you need. Keep in mind that, in today's ever-changing world, your ability to learn quickly and effectively is one of your biggest assets, and it entails you being able to:

Find the right information, and

Implement it effectively, by developing a mastery mindset.

In the next section, we'll discuss how to select the right information to achieve your goals.

4

How to select the right product for you

Note that, in this section, we'll use the words "product" and "courses" but most of the advice given here applies to any product, course or service you may use to achieve positive results or solve any problem in your life.

There are so many products available these days that it can be challenging to identify the right one for you. Some of the following questions may cross your mind:

Is it legit or is it a scam?

Can it really help me achieve my goal?

Is it right for me or is it really for people who have a different background, level of experience, personality, et cetera?

Asking yourself these questions is perfectly normal and is part of the process. Now, I would like to give you some advice to help identify the right product for you. This is important because, if anything prevents you from being fully committed to the products you buy, your chances of success are severely diminished.

1) Ask people who have already achieved a similar goal

Do you know someone who has already achieved the goal you're trying to reach? Why not ask them how they did it? They might be able to recommend a great product. As an added benefit, you'll have more faith in the product, making it more likely you'll see positive results. After all, if one of your acquaintances achieved a similar goal, so can you.

Alternatively, ask people if they know a great course, program or coach that will help you achieve your goal. For instance, to do so, you could post a message on social media asking for recommendations.

Look for role models

Are there people online who have already achieved your goal?

No matter what goals you target or problems you are trying to solve, some people have already been through the same process successfully and have mastered it.

Let's say you want to create an online business. Now, who has a similar online business and how did they build it? Did they create a product to share their knowledge? Do they have a resource page on their blog to share the programs they used? If not, can you ask them what they would do if they were in your situation?

One more thing you can do is to look for videos on YouTube and see if you can find someone you can relate to. Once you trust the YouTuber enough, find out if they offer a product that meets your needs. I have been following a handful of people for years because I love their YouTube content. Over the years, I've bought products from them and have never regretted my purchases. Try to discover similar people. We prefer to buy from people we know, like and trust. And the more we trust them, the more confidence we'll have in their products.

You'll find that the more you trust the products you buy, the easier it will be to fully commit, and the better your results will be. This is true even if the product might not be the best one available. This is why the trust factor is so important.

To sum up, to improve your chances of success, boost the trust factor by:

Asking successful friends to recommend a product they have used and benefited from, and

Choosing a product from someone you can trust and relate to.

WARNING: Note that the point isn't to buy every product someone creates just because you trust him or her. Otherwise, you would be reproducing the same pattern of jumping from one product to another. You want to avoid doing this at all costs. Only buy the products you need right now to achieve your current goals.

Final tip: avoid taking advice from people who don't know what they're talking about. For instance, don't ask your impoverished uncle to teach you

how to manage your money. Listen to people who are actually getting good results and who are embodying the goals you want to achieve.

2) Make sure the timing is right

There are tons of great products I'd love to buy. However, most of them aren't what I need right now. In short, the timing is wrong. Purchasing these products right now would only distract me and severely reduce my chances of achieving my current goals.

Whenever you invest in a product, you need to be totally committed to it. Otherwise, you'll fail to obtain the results you desire. No matter how amazing a product may be, understand that the timing may be wrong. Be honest and ask yourself, "Is this product what I need right now? Is it really what I should focus my attention on?" If not, add it to your list of potential future purchases and move on. Alternatively, you can buy the product now and use it at a more opportune time.

Also, bear in mind that no matter how big the discount you may be promised today, the same discount will almost always be available in the near future. So, don't be afraid of missing out. In fact, to achieve your major goals you'll have to get used to "missing out" on many, many things. Every successful person does this. People who try to seize every possible opportunity actually achieve nothing.

3) Make certain the product is right for you

Everybody is different and what can work well for one person might not work for another. Below are some factors that may affect how much value you'll be able to squeeze out of a product:

Your goal/vision. Does the product align with your vision? Does it enhance your focus, or does it scatter it? If you make the most of the product and achieve the result you're promised, will it move you closer to your destination, your vision? You want to make sure that everything you do moves you in the right direction—the direction that helps you achieve your goal. Everything else is a distraction.

Your mindset. Do you have the discipline needed to follow through and obtain the right results? If not, does the product include an accountability system that would work for you? It's important you feel confident in your ability to achieve tangible results. Without such an accountability system, you'll probably dabble, and if you're not fully committed, you won't get good results.

Your personality/strengths. Do you feel as though the philosophy or strategy behind the product is aligned with your personality and strengths, or do you feel like something is off? For instance, the overall strategy behind the product may require you to cold call people. If you're unwilling to do this right now, move on.

Your level of motivation. Do you feel as though it is what you really need right now? Does it inspire you? This is where honesty comes into play. Only you will know whether a product is the right fit for you. If, for any reason, you're not willing to commit fully to it right now, don't buy it.

Your experience/skills. What previous experience do you have? Do you have the skills needed to move forward using the product? If you think the product is too advanced, you might want to pass.

Your schedule. How much time and energy can you spend on the product? If you're already feeling overwhelmed, adding one more thing

to your plate might not be a good idea—unless the product helps you simplify your life and boost your focus.

Here's a specific example to illustrate my point.

Goal/vision

As you know, my goal is to be and remain a full-time writer for many years to come. There are many different strategies I can use to boost my sales and increase my income, but they aren't all aligned with my vision. Below are some examples of potential strategies I might consider trying:

Find a publisher and release my books the traditional way.

Hire ghostwriters and publish tons of books.

Publish low-content books (journals, planners, agendas et cetera).

Write only a few books, have a big launch and sell products on the backend.

Write and publish books consistently every couple of months and promote them heavily.

All these strategies can work, but my current strategy is to write and publish books consistently every couple of months or so. Being clear about my strategy allows me to select the right products, while skipping any that are out of alignment with my goal.

A while ago, I bought a course on how to use AMS (Amazon marketing service) to promote my books. This is a good move since it is aligned with my ongoing strategy. On the other hand, I refused to buy a course on how to create low-content books. While I'm considering creating journals in the future, now isn't the right time and I don't want to deviate from my current strategy.

What about you? Are the products, books and courses you consume aligned with your overall strategy, or do you frequently deviate from your strategy in an attempt to make money or follow the trends?

Note that temptations are everywhere. You will have to focus on your main goals over and over again, which is why it's critical to have a clear goal and an effective strategy to reach it.

Mindset

Before investing in a course, I ask myself whether I'm willing to go through it from beginning to end—and with a mastery mindset.

Personality and strengths

As an introvert, I don't want to spend my days doing Facebook Live or podcasts interviews. Therefore, I tend to stay away from any courses or information on how to use these media to sell more books. It doesn't mean I can't or won't do Facebook Live or interviews in the future, but right now is not the time.

Level of motivation

Before buying a course, I always assess my level of motivation. I try to answer the following question:

Am I confident in my ability to take consistent action and achieve the results I want?

When I experience inner resistance, I try to identify where it comes from and, if I can't move past it, I don't buy the course.

Experience/skills

When I sense a product is too technical for me and that I'm unlikely to follow through, I won't be using it.

Schedule

I know that I'm unlikely to have the time, energy or motivation to go through multiple courses at once, therefore I focus only on one or two courses at a time. The more valuable (and usually expensive) a course is, the more time I will dedicate to it.

To sum up, before deciding whether or not to invest in any given product, I invite you to ask yourself the following questions:

Is this product what I need to achieve my current goal? Look at the specific results you can expect from the course. Are they perfectly aligned with your goal?

Is this product for me? Do you have the skills, mindset, motivation, time and personality required to make the most of this product? If not, you might want to move on until you identify the right product for you.

Is now the right time or would I be better off waiting? Perhaps the product may help you achieve your goals but it's too early because you have other things to take care of first. If so, wait. Don't worry about missing out.

Am I willing to commit until I obtain results? When you invest in a product, you must be committed to follow through and be consistent or there's no point investing in it in the first place. Can you really commit to doing this right now? If not, wait.

A few pieces of advice:

1) Avoid webinars

Most webinars aim to sell you something. Although there is nothing wrong with this in principle, be careful. Marketers are great at getting you all excited. No matter how excited you feel when you watch a webinar, take a step back and ask yourself whether the product is what you need right now. If not, just move on. Again, don't fear missing out. Don't fall for the so-

called limited spots or “watch it now because there won’t be any replay.” This is almost never the case. Why would someone who wants to make more sales ever limit the number of spots available on a webinar or refuse to offer a replay?

2) Beware of bundles and special offers

Sometimes, you’ll be able to purchase a bundle of products very inexpensively. While these offers may be incredible, it is not necessarily a good idea to go for them. Before buying such products ask yourself:

Which product(s) do I actually need right now? Most of the products in the bundle will act as distractions rather than as tools to facilitate your success. They may be good, but they may not be what you need right now. However, if you discover a couple of products you really need, consider buying the bundle.

In my opinion, how much are these products actually worth? To assess the value of a product, refer to the section, How to evaluate the value of a course.

Are they up-to-date? Products part of special offers are often older products and may be obsolete. Remember, to be fully committed, you need to have complete faith in the product. If you believe a product is obsolete, refrain from using it.

Here is how I would approach it:

First, I would have a quick look at each product to see if there is anything I like. If a few products pique my interest, I would ask myself the following questions (note, this is more of an automatic thought-process than conscious questioning):

Do I really need them to achieve my goal?

Do I need them right now?

Will I use them right away?

How much are they really worth to me?

Then, I would make a decision whether to buy or not. In short, I decide which products I will use, how I will use them and when. Then, I discard all the other products, and never give them another thought. For products I might need in the future, I will schedule them for use at a later time.

3) Avoid buying anything on the spot

I believe we should absolutely avoid making an immediate decision and give ourselves at least one day to think the purchase through. This is especially true for expensive products or services. Consequently, don't rush into buying anything. Instead, ask yourself whether the product is really what you need now and whether buying it is the best current use of your money and time.

4) See if they have a money-back guarantee

Look at whether the creator(s) of the product offers a money-back guarantee. To be honest, I'm not a big fan of this feature. I believe investing in a product with the intent of asking for a refund shows a lack of commitment. Having said that, this feature does show that the people who created the product are confident in their offering.

Now, let's see how to assess the value of a product so you can make an informed decision before buying it.

5

How to evaluate the value of a course

The value offered by a course is quite subjective, but I would like to present a guideline to help you decide whether a course is worth the investment. You can expect four results from a course or product:

Saving time,

Making or saving money,

Saving mental energy, or

Providing emotional benefits.

1) Saving time

Time is more valuable than money. Therefore, the amount of time a course can save you is one of the most important factors to take into consideration. Many courses allow you to learn from someone who has already achieved the results you desire. By following a successful person's method, you can dramatically reduce your learning curve and achieve results much faster.

Now, the key questions to ask yourself before purchasing a course are:

How much is an hour of your time worth?

How many hours will you potentially save?

If you want to assign a rough value to a course, you need to answer the above two questions.

Since wealthy people value their time tremendously, you'll find they are willing to pay more to buy it back. On the other hand, people who struggle financially often attach less value to their time. As a result, some of them will waste hours standing in line just to save a few bucks on a product.

Do you know how much an hour of your time is worth?

To answer this question, simply look at how much you can earn per hour. If you're an employee, divide your monthly paycheck by the number of hours you spend at work each month—including commuting time and lunch breaks. This is how much an hour of your time is worth right now.

If you're an entrepreneur, you have more room to increase the amount of value you create in one hour. While you can do the same calculation as above, you can also start thinking of how much you want an hour of your time to be worth.

So, how much is an hour of your time actually worth to you?

Now we will address the second question.

Estimating how much time a certain course will save you can be tricky. However, you can calculate the number of hours you would need to save to break even, based on your hourly wage.

For instance, if your hourly wage is $15 and you estimate you can save twenty hours by buying a course sold for $99, it's probably a good deal. By spending a mere $99, you'll save twenty hours, which is worth $300 (20 x $15/hour).

Last year, I bought a software to format eBooks and paperback books. While it cost me around $300, it saves me hours each time I use it and will probably save me dozens of hours over the next few years. I also purchased a $100 keyword search program. Considering I run hundreds of Amazon ads, each using hundreds of keywords, this software saves me many hours too. Both software packages were excellent investments because they allowed me to buy back my time.

Remember, your time is more valuable than money. Therefore, continually look for ways to buy back your time, while increasing the value you can provide with an hour of your time.

2) Making or saving money

A product can also allow you to make or save more money. For example, a sales course offering a step-by-step process may help you generate a few extra sales each month. Now, if the amount of new sales expected exceeds the price of the course, it might be worth it. Let's say each sale you make generates $200 of profit and the course costs $999. To break even all you need is five extra sales. Is this realistic? This is what you have to figure out.

In addition, a course can save you money. Perhaps you can use it as a replacement for a more expensive course or service, or perhaps you can use it instead of hiring a freelancer.

Here are the key questions you should ask yourself:

Can I realistically make my money back, and exactly what would it take to do so? For instance, how many sales would you need to make? How many clients would you need to find?

Will this product save me money or reduce my costs and how exactly is it going to do that?

Answering these two questions will help give a value to the product you're considering buying.

For example, I can use my formatting software instead of paying someone to format my book. This allows me to save the money I would otherwise have spent.

3) Saving mental energy

A product can also help spare your mental energy. For instance, a step-by-step program can prevent you from wasting your energy trying to find the right information. Consequently, it can not only save you time but also preserve your mental energy and allow you to focus better and for longer. Remember, each second you spend being unfocused is gone forever. At any given time, you're either focused or you aren't.

Ask yourself the following questions:

Will this product allow me to improve my focus?

How much is this focus worth?

Over time, I have become more and more reluctant to search for free information online. It soaks up my mental energy and scatters my focus. I want to protect my focus at all costs and eliminate anything that could distract me. As a result, for my important goals, I tend to buy courses. This way, I can follow the lessons at my own pace and will remain focused.

4) Providing emotional benefits

A product can also provide significant emotional benefits. For example, while it might be difficult to assign an objective value to a diet program, for someone who has been struggling with obesity since childhood, a successful program will have tremendous psychological and emotional

value. Losing weight could boost an individual's energy levels, enhance their self-esteem and improve their overall health.

What about someone who buys insurance to be able to cancel a flight if needed? If it brings peace of mind, it has real value.

The bottom line is that the emotional benefits of a product shouldn't be discounted. Sometimes, it can be worth parting with your hard-earned money to gain peace of mind and maintain your happiness. While this seems obvious, many people fail to evaluate the emotional benefits when making purchase decisions.

For example, is it worth suing someone in hope of winning a $20,000 compensation claim when you know the judicial procedures may last for years and cause you so much stress? Perhaps. It depends on how much you value your peace of mind and happiness.

Is it worth getting into a fight over the phone with someone who owes you $20? If you can't sleep until you get your money back, perhaps. If you have better things to do, probably not.

Below are two key questions to consider:

What specific emotional benefits can I gain from this product?

How much are they worth to me personally?

In a nutshell, the value of a product is the sum of:

The number of hours you can save—and how much you value your time,

The amount of money you can expect to make or save,

The amount of mental energy you can preserve, and

The emotional benefits you will gain (and how much you value them).

When you use these questions, you should be able to find the right information and purchase adequate products to achieve your desired results.

Next, we'll see how you can cultivate the right mindset to obtain results from any information you choose to use, whether free or paid.

* * *

Action steps

Using the table in your action guide, make a list of all the products, courses or services you bought in the past twelve months. Now, in the corresponding columns, write:

How many hours it saved you.

How much extra money you made.

How much mental energy it spared you (and how much this is worth to you).

What type of emotional benefits you received (and how much this is worth to you).

If you didn't gain much from the products you purchased, ask yourself why and what you can do about it.

6

Understanding the importance of mastery

Most people are looking for innovative solutions to solve all their problems. However, the truth is, most of the information out there isn't new—and nor does it need to be.

If you're looking for something new you might not find it. Why? Because, for the most part, what you need isn't new or innovative information. It is applying what you already know and mastering anything you learn.

Let's take productivity for instance. Do you think you need complicated filing systems, multiple to-do lists apps or another book on productivity?

No.

You "simply" need to write down your most important tasks and work on them first thing in the morning while removing as many distractions as you can (social media, phone notifications, interruptions, internet, email, et cetera). You also need to sleep well, eat well and exercise regularly (few people are doing these simple things). If you can do this, you'll be far more productive than the majority of the population.

A. The five key beliefs of masters

The main reasons some people achieve results while others fail is related to their beliefs. What you believe, dictates the actions you take and, therefore, the results you obtain. People with a mastery mindset tend to hold the following beliefs:

1) If he can, I can. They assume that if someone else can achieve something, they can too. If others can make money online, lose weight or design a career they love, they can too. They will not stop trying until they find a way to obtain the results they want.

2) I can always improve. They understand they can always get better. Instead of thinking, "I'm not good enough," they think, "I'm not good enough yet." They know that, if they keep working on themselves and on their craft, improvement is inevitable.

3) I can learn anything I want. They know that, if they want to reach their goals, they can learn anything they need.

4) If I don't live it, I don't know it. They understand they can only really learn by doing. Instead of passively consuming information, they keep practicing over and over until they achieve the desired results.

5) If I do something once, I can do it a million times. They realize that if they can do something just one time, they can do it over and over. For instance, if they can make their first dollar online, they can make $100,

$10,000 and perhaps even $1,000,000. If they find one coaching client, they can find ten or twenty more. If they summon the courage to deliver their first speech, they can deliver another and another. Thus, all they need is to push themselves enough to be able to do something once and trust they can repeat the process.

Adopting these beliefs will help you develop a mastery mindset and reach your goals.

Before I move on, let's look at the four words you need to stop saying.

B. The sentence/expression you must stop saying

"I already know that."

Have you ever said this?

Whenever you hear someone making this pronouncement, he or she likely doesn't know what they're saying. The truth is, if you don't practice something consistently—and, if possible, every day—you don't really know it. Sure, you may know it intellectually, but what good is it doing you?

For instance, you might know that you should:

Eat healthily—but you aren't,

Exercise—but you seldom do,

Go bed early—but you binge-watch Netflix until the middle of the night,

Spend less time on social media—but you check Facebook every fifteen minutes, and

Work on that really important task—but you procrastinate.

So, how much do you really, really know? Honestly. There is a very simple way to find out—look at the results you're producing in your life. Results don't lie and, in the end, they are what matters the most. For example:

Are you fit and healthy or overweight?

Do you complete your key tasks, or do you procrastinate?

Do you wake up every day with loads of energy or do you feel tired?

Is your business successful, or are you struggling?

Believing you already know something when you don't is one of life's biggest traps. If you're not careful, falling into this trap can get you stuck for years. Remember, it is impossible to truly know something if you're not embodying it in your life. Therefore, if you believe you know something but fail to see any results, you must work on developing a mastery mindset until you achieve actual tangible results.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, write down five things you know intellectually but haven't really mastered. To do so, simply look at areas in your life where you fail to achieve the results you want.

C. Developing a mastery mindset

Understanding the concept of mastery and adopting a mastery mindset is one of the things that will have the greatest impact on your life. It will allow you to:

Overcome Shiny Object Syndrome and stay focused on one thing until you achieve the results you want,

Learn anything effectively until you become a true master at it,

Go from one success to another—doing one thing at a time—and design the life you want,

Boost your self-confidence, and

So much more.

The 7 Pillars of the Mastery Mindset

First, I must mention that, like anything else, the mastery mindset is far from being a new concept. In fact, it has been around for many years. The famous coach, Tony Robbins, and the online entrepreneur, Stefan Pylarinos, spend a lot of time teaching it to their students. However, I must also say that too few people have successfully adopted this mindset.

Now, let's have a look at the 7 Pillars needed to develop a mastery mindset that will serve you for many years to come.

1) Becoming a Master of Repetition

Every successful person is a master of repetition. The hugely successful Olympic swimmer, Michael Phelps, didn't miss a day of training between the age of twelve and eighteen, swimming more than 2,100 days in a row. Martial arts experts practice the same move thousands of times. And kids learn how to write by copying the alphabet over and over. In fact, it is impossible to become proficient at anything without embracing the philosophy of repetition.

Repetition is the process that allows you to assimilate anything and, over time, become highly skilled. Do you remember the first time you drove a car? You probably felt overwhelmed due to the large amount of new information you had to process. You might even have wondered whether you would ever be able to drive. But, after spending many hours practicing, this skill has become automatic. You've effectively transferred the driving process to your subconscious mind. This is really what repetition and mastery are about: repeating something so many times it becomes second nature.

This is how habits work too.

Developing a new habit can be difficult but, stick to it for long enough, and it will become almost automatic. If you keep adopting one new habit at a time, you will soon become a highly productive person.

The bottom line is that knowing things only intellectually is not enough. You need to practice over and over until the skills become second nature. You must adopt the mindset that you will practice as many times as necessary until you achieve the results you want. Because, after all, if others can do it, you can too.

2) Mastering the fundamentals

Most people believe they know more than they actually do know. Then, when nothing they do seems to work, they're left confused. This is because their fundamental skills are weak. They may have been avoiding learning a specific skill because they think it's not important—or because they were too eager to move on to the next thing. The devil is often in the details. By overlooking one small detail after another, many people end up miles away from where they intended.

Do you really know everything you need to know about your goals? Have you applied what you've learned?

Once you have a specific goal in mind, you must learn everything you need to know about it. For instance, you must learn:

How to do weight exercises properly or you will not get the results you want and may even hurt yourself in the process.

How to learn effectively or you'll forget most of what you learn and waste too much time.

About healthy food, or you'll think you are eating healthily when you aren't, et cetera.

The most successful people on earth are obsessed with the fundamentals and there is a specific reason for this. Without strong fundamentals, your potential for growth is limited. Without the fundamentals, you can't become great let alone world-class at whatever you do.

Despite the fact that he was already the best golfer in the world, Tiger Woods wanted to improve his game. To this end, he hired a coach, who told him he would have to change his swing. Yes, to improve his game, Tiger Woods needed to relearn the fundamentals, and he did so. Interestingly, Tiger Woods' situation is not uncommon. Many world-class athletes return to the basics for the sake of improving their performance. This enables them to take their craft to the next level.

Remember, success is the result of specific processes. If you don't achieve the desired results, there's probably something wrong with the process you're currently following.

To master the fundamentals, you need to:

Follow a step-by-step approach,

Apply everything you learn, and

Return to the fundamentals as often as necessary.

Following a step-by-step approach

Without clear guidance and accountability, you'll find it difficult to learn anything on your own. What you need is a blueprint, showing you what to do step-by-step. The more structured your learning, the easier it will be to make progress.

To be honest, this is something I've been struggling with. Eager to make progress, I often try to learn as fast as possible, without allowing enough time to assimilate the information or enough practice to build strong fundamentals. If you identify yourself as a seminar junkie, this is probably what you're doing right now. You're reading book after book or going to one seminar after the other. However, this type of behavior generally leads to subpar results.

Whenever you follow a step-by-step course—which I encourage you to do —I invite you to do the following:

Decide exactly how long you'll spend on the course by setting a specific schedule. For instance, you could decide to work on it for eight weeks.

Set blocks of time every day or every week. For instance, you could decide to dedicate one hour to the course every weekday.

Make sure you complete all the exercises in a lesson before moving to the next.

Avoid taking more than one or two courses at a time. It's unlikely you'll be able to achieve great results with more courses on your plate. So, stick to one or two courses, schedule them and commit to obtaining tangible results before starting the next course.

Applying everything you learn

To master the fundamentals and make progress, it is essential for you to boost your ability to implement what you learn. Without implementation, no significant results are possible. Therefore, whatever source of information you use, make sure you work on every action item available. This entails:

Doing everything your coach suggests,

Completing all the exercises in the course you take, and

Going through all the exercises offered in the books you read (this one, for example).

Now, you can't take action on all the information you consume. What you can do, however, is make sure that, for any major goal, you take consistent action on everything you learn.

Returning to the fundamentals when necessary

In the past, you may have bought a course or a book but failed to achieve tangible results. If so, it is important you revisit the fundamentals. Sometimes, overlooking one small detail can make all the difference between success and failure. It is also important you learn to question yourself rather than the validity of the information you consume.

Previously, we learned how to identify high-quality information. As long as you've done your best to select the best information available, avoid questioning its validity. Trust the program and take consistent action on it.

Ask yourself the following questions:

Have I really completed all the exercises diligently?

Have I missed anything?

You'll often find that you haven't been as diligent as you might have been. Remember, as a master, you must practice everything until you become living proof of it.

Let's assume you bought a program that offers a step-by-step method to sell your services but, after multiple attempts, you have yet to close a sale. Now, what may be missing? Are you following the script to the letter or are you trying to be fancy? Did you discard a few things because you didn't think they were important? Avoid doing this. Instead, stick to the method exactly until you make your first sale. Remember, if others have done it before, so can you.

3) Having faith in the process

Do you have faith in the process you are following? If you hire a coach, take a course or buy a book and believe it's not going to work, you've already lost half of the battle. You must have faith in the process and commit to doing whatever it takes to make it work for you. Remember, if others can succeed, you can too. Make it a must to achieve positive results and never give up until you do. You want to build a track record with any product you use. For instance:

If you bought a course to help you find coaching clients, do whatever it takes to win the first client. Then remember that if you can find one client, you can find many more.

If you bought a program on how to publish an eBook on Amazon, stick to the process and make sure you publish at least one book.

If you purchased a diet program, stick to it until you lose at least a few pounds.

Do as you are told

Having faith in the process also means you must do exactly as you're told and avoid ignoring anything. If you start nitpicking what to apply and what not to apply, it's possible nothing will work for you. You probably bought a course because you're not an expert and want to learn. If so, follow the lessons diligently, even when you don't understand why. In short, have faith in the process.

This reminds me of the time I taught French to the elderly in Japan. They wanted to understand everything about French grammar. Every time there was an exception—and if you're familiar with French there are loads of exceptions—they wanted to know why. As you can imagine, they didn't make much progress. Instead of trusting the process and practicing repeatedly, they acted as linguists. Don't do that. Instead, be a sponge, absorb information and act on it consistently.

Avoid mixing information

Avoid combining information from various courses. Once you find the best source of information, stick to that particular process. If you want, you can change your approach and try other courses later on but, for now, it's important you develop the habit of sticking to something until you gain success.

4) Being willing to learn

Your ability to humble yourself and to remain coachable is one of the keys to effective learning. The more responsibility you take for the results you achieve, the faster you will grow. Always be willing to learn and take personal responsibility before blaming others for your lack of progress.

The legendary investor, Warren Buffet, has been reading five or six hours per day for decades. Although in his eighties, he's still spending hours each day trying to master his craft. This is because he understands there is

always more to learn. Even the best of the best in their field learn continuously, and so should you.

The bottom line is that you must keep learning and growing until you achieve the results you want. If you let your ego and pride stand in the way, you'll slow your progress.

If you've been struggling to obtain certain results for years, you can blame others as much as you want, but the only constant in the equation is you. You are probably the problem but, as it happens, you are also the solution. Be open to learning and you might find everything starts changing for you.

Here are some questions I recommend you ask yourself:

Might I have been wrong here?

What could I do differently?

What is the real bottleneck holding back my success?

Who could I turn to for advice?

5) Embracing long-term thinking

The ability to think long-term is one of the best predictors of success. When you focus on your long-term vision and act accordingly every day, you are

far more likely to create the life you want. Therefore, if what you do every day doesn't move you closer to your vision, start questioning your methods.

Masters always have a long-term plan. They know they cannot excel at anything without first spending years working on their craft. What about you? Are you a master? If you're unsure, look at the tasks you've completed today or this week. Are these tasks contributing to your long-term vision or are they distractions? Are you creating your future proactively, or are you reacting to your environment?

Learn to think long-term and, over time, you will notice a significant difference.

6) Being consistent

Another key characteristic of a master is their consistency. Consistency is focus repeated every day in the pursuit of a long-term vision. Without consistency, your focus is short-lived and has little-to-no power. And without a solid focus, you can't master anything. You will merely jump from one opportunity to another.

Put differently, consistency is using your ax to hit your big tree—your goal—at the exact same spot over and over until the tree topples. It's practicing the same kick ten thousand times until it becomes deadly.

To give you real life examples, it is:

Creating and uploading YouTube videos every day for years,

Writing every day and publishing a book every two months for years,

Waking up at the same time every single day, and

Calling prospects every single morning.

Consistency allows you to build momentum over time. It boosts your ability to focus, increases your self-esteem and skyrockets your productivity. To become a master, simply start by doing something consistently every day, no matter how small it may be. To begin with, do this for thirty days in a row.

Also, understand there is no such thing as one hundred percent consistency. Nobody is one hundred percent consistent. Therefore, avoid beating yourself up whenever you fall off track. Instead, show self-compassion and refocus on your goal. In the grand scheme of things, skipping one workout or one meditation session isn't a big deal. More importantly, never use temporary setbacks as an excuse to give up. After a small blip, pick yourself up and refocus on whatever goals or habits you want to adopt in your life.

Self-criticism doesn't work. Replace it with self-compassion and watch how things change for you.

7) Focusing

Masters focus on one thing (or a very few things). Instead of scattering their focus, masters invest it wisely to design the life they want. Remember, you can only focus on one thing at a time. When you fail to concentrate your attention on something that improves your life, you move away from the life you want to create. Eventually, what you focus on consistently day after day creates your life. So, make certain you get it right. Otherwise, ten years from now, you will end up in a totally different place from the one you intended.

Find a few things to commit to and, relying on the mastery mindset, stick to those things until you achieve the desired outcome.

You won't become a master overnight, but as you learn to develop a mastery mindset during the coming months and years, you will find yourself achieving better results faster than ever before.

You can be either a master or a dabbler. The choice is yours.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 for each of the 7 Pillars.

D. Implementing strategic learning

Scheduling your learning

If you're not careful, you can spend all your time learning without making much progress. You may read book after book or start multiple courses at the same time. This type of behavior only leads to information overload and will scatter your focus. For instance, there is no point in starting three different diets simultaneously. And whether you want to become a better public speaker, build a YouTube channel or change career, taking several courses at once will likely be counterproductive, too. Indulging in this type of behavior often leads to the following problems:

Information overload. Having consumed too much information on a topic, you may feel overwhelmed. Understand, that while learning new things can make you feel good, it will often work against you. Reduce the amount of new information you consume and increase the time you spend implementing what you learn.

Confusion. One course may recommend you do one thing, while another may suggest you do the opposite. This will create confusion. To avoid confusion and ensure you'll make progress over time, focus on one course at a time, and do everything the course recommends.

Analysis paralysis. You've absorbed so much information, you find yourself unable to decide the right course of action. You're overthinking. Again, the advice is to consume only the information you need and avoid gathering information from too many different sources.

To avoid the above issues, you must become a strategic learner by deciding what exactly you need to learn and why you need to learn it. Then, you

must stick to one specific program or book until you achieve tangible results.

Now, it doesn't mean you should never ever read books, watch videos or even check out other courses on the same topic. Books can be helpful in changing your mindset or giving you some interesting insights, and videos or courses can give you extra information that may be valuable, as well. However, you need to make sure that, when it comes to taking real action on the key goals that matter to you, you focus mostly on one specific program and stick to it, using the mastery mindset. This will allow you to maintain laser focus, complete what you start and achieve the results you want.

Let's say you want to create an online business and make it your primary source of income moving forward. You can:

Read dozens of books and watch hundreds of videos on how to create an online business, or

Buy a specific program from someone who clearly knows what he or she's talking about.

Because this is a major goal for you, it is probably a good idea to invest in a step-by-step course. It may cost you money upfront, but it can save you time (and money) in the long term, providing you:

Select the right course for you, and

Commit to taking action on everything you learn consistently until you achieve the right results.

The course might not be perfect, but it can help you start on the right foot and accumulate small wins. While you may read books or watch videos on a similar topic, make sure the primary course remains your focus for as long as is necessary. You need to avoid consuming any information that is out of alignment with your overall strategy. Stick to your strategy unless you have a very good reason to change. Otherwise, you'll keep jumping from one opportunity to another. If necessary, re-read the section, How to Select the Right Product for You.

One last thing to remember is, while you may believe consuming more information will help you make faster progress, less is often better. For instance, focusing on one great book and applying everything in it can be far more effective than reading fifty books. The information you collect is only valuable to the extent you apply it. Often, you don't need more information, you merely need to apply what you already know. And you need to do so consistently and with a clear purpose in mind.

How to schedule your learning

An effective way to avoid jumping from one topic to the next is to decide what you're going to learn and to schedule it.

To schedule your learning, you can follow the steps below:

Decide what you need to learn exactly and why. What you choose to learn right now should be connected to your long-term vision.

Find the most suitable book, course or program. Select the best source of information to achieve your goals (see the section, How to Select the Right Product for You).

Set a specific target. To learn effectively, you must know exactly what outcome you seek. Do you want to double your sales? Find five new clients? Lose ten pounds? Be specific.

Choose how much time you'll spend on the course. Will you focus on a program for thirty days? Sixty days? Six months? And how many hours will you spend on it every week?

Each week, schedule specific blocks of time dedicated to learning. For instance, you may choose to assign forty-five minutes each morning to studying.

Practice active learning. To make real progress, do your homework by implementing what you learn, taking notes and reviewing them. Remember, intellectual knowledge is not enough. You can read hundreds of books but unless you act on the knowledge gained, nothing will change for you. Be proactive with your learning.

Make it a daily habit. Whenever possible, practice what you learn every day to fully integrate it into your subconscious. Having a daily process in place is one of the most effective ways to remain consistent and achieve long-term results. For instance, take a goal like losing weight. To achieve real weight loss, you must eat more healthily and exercise every day, not just once in a while.

As a rule of thumb, the more you learn with intent, the more effective this learning will be. Thus, while reading books or watching videos can be fun, make sure that you use strategic learning when pursuing any major goal. Learn only what you need to.

Finally, remember that your ability to design the life you want boils down mainly to two “simple” things:

Finding the right information for you, and

Acting on it until you achieve the desired outcome.

Part VI

Overcoming procrastination

The reason many people look for tips and tricks to become more productive is because they refuse to tackle their most important tasks. In short, they procrastinate. The truth is, you can't stay focused—and be productive—when you regularly procrastinate on the key tasks you should be working on. Perhaps you:

Avoid prospecting clients and spend countless hours doing research or working on a proposal instead,

Read books on how to sell more books, waste hours in writer's groups on Facebook or post inspirational quotes just to avoid doing what you should do—write, or

Keep reading books on how to approach men/women but you never go out and actually do it.

I believe procrastination happens for one or several of the following reasons:

Lack of clarity. You don't know what to do or how to do it and feel stuck as a result. Taking time to plan your year, month, week and day

can help you gain clarity and reduce your tendency to procrastinate. Spending time to find the right information and looking for role models can also help you identify what needs to be done and foster more decisive actions.

Fear. You're afraid of finding you're not as good as you thought. You fear rejection or are scared because you need to do something you've never done before. Identify what you're scared of and allow yourself to feel the fear. Being aware of your fears is the first step to being able to act, despite them.

Lack of motivation. You have no interest in a task or even hate it. Or something inside you is holding you back. Perhaps the task is not aligned with your values and vision. If so, ask yourself whether this is what you actually want.

Lack of routine or discipline. You keep putting off the tasks you should be working on, and procrastination has become a habit. Fortunately, you can develop the habit of getting things done by adopting daily rituals that revolve around your major tasks. As you do so, procrastination will become less of a problem. Simply start small and build momentum. For instance, you can choose to write, exercise or work on your side business at an allotted time every day. Just make sure you spend a few minutes each day doing things that move you closer to your vision. Commit to this by undertaking a 30-day challenge.

Lack of accountability. Nobody is holding you accountable and therefore it's easy for you to slack off. Having an accountability partner whom you can talk to regularly and share your goals with will make completing your tasks more likely. If you need stronger accountability, you can also hire a coach. For more on accountability refer to the part, How to Create an Accountability System that Works, in the section, Breaking Down Your Goal.

Once you have a compelling vision, you know what you need to do this week, have created a daily routine and have established a solid accountability system, your focus will improve and your tendency to procrastinate will lessen.

Now, let's look at a few tips to help you overcome procrastination.

1

Ten simple steps to overcome procrastination

When you are about to work on an important task, do you feel the urge to drink a coffee, go for a walk, or call a friend? If so, you might be a victim of procrastination. Don't worry. You're not the only one. To a greater or lesser degree, procrastination affects everyone. To counteract this tendency, let's review the ten simple steps you can use to overcome procrastination.

Step 1. Understand what's hidden behind procrastination

As we discussed before, there are a number of reasons people procrastinate, which include:

Fear,

Lack of clarity,

Lack of motivation,

Lack of routine or discipline, and

Lack of accountability.

Whenever you find yourself procrastinating it is important you identify the hidden reason(s) behind the urge. This is the first step before you can actually overcome the condition.

Step 2. Identify your story

The second step to overcoming procrastination is to identify the story behind it. When you feel like procrastinating, what are you telling yourself? What thoughts cross your mind? What excuses are you using?

Some excuses might be:

I'm too tired,

I'll do a poor job, and

I'll do it tomorrow.

Let's address some of these excuses right away.

I'm too tired.

While it is true you may be tired, you also have to realize you're not your mind. You don't need to listen to it. Your mind just wants to have it easy. Navy SEAL, David Goggins, uses the forty percent rule. According to this

rule, even when you think you can't take it anymore, you're using only forty percent of your brain's capacity.

I'll do a poor job.

If you schedule a task for today, it means you believe that you can do it, right? Therefore, being afraid of doing a poor job is not the real issue. If you think you'll do a poor job today, what makes you think you'll do a better job tomorrow or next week?

I'll do it tomorrow.

Sure, doing it tomorrow might not be a big deal. But if you can't discipline yourself to complete today's tasks, how likely are you to design your ideal life in the future? Disciplining yourself to complete the task in front of you is, ultimately, what will allow you to create more freedom in your life.

The bottom line is, you should strive to complete every task when you said you would, even if you're "too tired" or think you'll do a poor job.

Start becoming aware of all the excuses you come up with. I encourage you to write them down.

Step 3. Rewrite your story

Now you've identified your story, create a new, more empowering, story to neutralize your old excuses. See the examples below:

I don't have time for this. → I find and make time for whatever I'm committed to doing.

I'm too tired. → I have full control over my mind, and I have more energy than I think. When I schedule a task, I always complete it.

Then, create affirmations or mantras. Repeat them every morning and throughout the day until they become part of your identity. Remember, procrastination is a habit. You want to reprogram your mind and implement a new habit—the habit of working on the tasks you schedule, whether you feel like it or not.

Step 4. Identify all the ways you distract yourself

The next step is to notice all the strategies you rely on to distract yourself. You'll have a hard time overcoming procrastination unless you're aware of how it manifests in your life.

How do you procrastinate? Do you go for a walk? Watch YouTube videos? Drink coffee? Check your social media feeds?

As you feel the urge to *insert your distraction here*, stay with the emotion. Allow yourself to feel the emotion. Don't judge yourself or blame yourself, just accept it for what it is. Simply shedding light on the thought process that goes with procrastination will help you overcome your need to procrastinate.

Now, make a list of all the devices you use to delay your tasks. Next time you catch yourself using any of them, take note.

Step 5. Clarify your "why"

Procrastination is often due to a lack of motivation. When you're excited about a goal, you don't run away from it, do you? No. You can't wait to work on it.

Look at the tasks you regularly procrastinate on. Why is this? Now, how can you reframe them so that you feel more motivated?

Can you integrate them into your bigger vision? For instance, a small boring task may move you closer to your ideal vision. If so, become aware of this and allow yourself to feel good about it.

Can you learn something from them? Perhaps, the tasks are boring or difficult, but doing them regularly can allow you to build discipline. Remember, the more discipline you develop, the more likely you are to achieve all your exciting goals.

Can you envision yourself feeling proud as you complete them? Imagine yourself having finished your tasks. Don't you feel good about it?

The more motivation you have to complete a task, the easier it will be to overcome your tendency to procrastinate.

Step 6. Start small

Instead of putting a lot of pressure on yourself, why not start small? Rather than writing two pages of your new book, maybe you can write one paragraph. Instead of exercising for one hour, perhaps you can exercise for just five minutes?

Starting small will help you overcome procrastination. It will also allow you to build momentum.

Step 7. Create daily habits to support you

If you tend to procrastinate on important tasks, start working on them first thing in the morning. If you want to write a book, start writing every morning. Again, start small. For instance, set a tiny goal of fifty words a day. By doing so, you'll develop a writing habit, making procrastination less of an issue.

Step 8. Prepare your environment

Your mind doesn't like what's difficult. It likes what's easy. Whenever you work on a task, remove any friction or obstacle that would require additional effort. For instance:

If you want to run, have your running gear ready next to your bed so you can go for a run immediately as you wake up.

For office work, remove all distractions from your desk and make sure you can access all the files you need immediately.

By doing this, your mind will have less opportunity to distract you with the usual excuses.

Step 9. Set small milestones and celebrate your small wins

Try to avoid battling with daunting tasks every day. This will only create more resistance, set you up for failure and kill your motivation. Instead, break down your tasks and set small milestones. This will:

Allow you to build the habit of completing tasks one hundred percent,

Increase your self-esteem as you accumulate quick wins, and

Reduce your urge to procrastinate.

Set small goals every day and accomplish them consistently for a few weeks.

Finally, don't forget to celebrate your small wins. By doing so, you'll increase your self-esteem, and you will be better equipped to complete more challenging tasks. Remember, completing tasks is a habit and, as with any other habit, it can be developed through practice.

Step 10. Just get started

We've already seen that most of us procrastinate because of some kind of fear. Often, when you start working on a task, you get into "the flow." When you're in this positive state, things become effortless, and you become so focused on your task that motivation isn't an issue anymore.

What's the best way to get in the flow? Getting started!

Remove any pressure or desire to perform well and give yourself permission to do a poor job. Say to yourself, "I'm going to work on that task for five minutes and see what happens." Often, you'll end up working on the task for longer than intended. Also, the more attention your task requires, the more likely you are to enter the flow quickly.

If you follow this Ten-Step process, you should be able to overcome or, at least, reduce your tendency to procrastinate.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, identify one task you often procrastinate on. Then, go through each of the ten steps.

2

How to overcome perfectionism

Are you a perfectionist? Do you feel as though what you're doing is never good enough?

There is nothing wrong with wanting to deliver high-quality work. However, when we expect things to be perfect, it can take far more time than necessary to complete a task. Even worse, it can lead to procrastination. In some cases, the work might never be completed.

Ironically, because it encourages procrastination, being a perfectionist can lead you to underperform. For instance, it may cause you to start working on a school paper or to prepare for a job interview at the last minute. This way, you avoid dealing with the truth: you may not reach the level of perfection you seek. In short, procrastination is the easy way out and can lead you to sabotage your efforts.

I'm now going to share a few truths that helped me deal with perfectionism.

1) You are exactly where you're supposed to be, doing exactly what you're supposed to do be doing

As a perfectionist, you probably hold the belief that what you're doing is not good enough. You think you should be able to do a far better job. However, this is a lie. The truth is very simple and will set you free:

Whatever you're producing now is as good (or as bad) as it supposed to be, and it reflects exactly your competence at this point in time.

Now, I'm not saying that to discourage you or to say you aren't good enough. I'm saying it to make you realize there is no need to expect yourself to be better than you actually are. There is no need to drop such a heavy weight on your shoulders.

A far more empowering belief is that you're as good as you need to be right now. This is what we call reality. Therefore, stop beating yourself up when you fail to deliver the quality of work you wanted to. Where you are now is merely a reflection of your past experiences and your existing skills.

Whenever I write a new book, I set a specific deadline. Now, I could certainly work on a book for years, but I don't. Instead, I stick to my original deadline the best I can.

What helped me is the realization that I simply needed to do my best in the time available, and that it was impossible to not be good enough. Whatever I do in the time I give myself to finish a task is always a perfect reflection of my current skills and my current level of experience.

Does this reflect the ultimate quality I seek to create? Of course not. However, it would be incorrect to say it isn't good enough. We can only say it isn't as good as I want it to be, yet. And the "yet" is important here.

2) I can always get better, and I will

The second truth you need to realize is that you can—and will—improve over time. Where you are now is the result of your past experiences and your present skills. Perhaps, the reason you don't feel good enough is because you lack experience, but you can't make up experiences you don't have, yet.

A few years ago, when I was studying at a business school in Tokyo, there were many times I felt I wasn't good enough. One specific example is when I had to use Microsoft Excel. Even though I had almost no experience of using it, I expected myself to do as well as students who had used it for years. Of course, my expectations were completely unrealistic. However, instead of admitting the truth and asking for support, I kept relying on other students' work, never really learning how to use the program. As a result, for many months, I felt ashamed of myself and inadequate.

I've repeated this type of behavior over and over in my life. This pattern comes from the false belief that I should always know how to do something. When I don't, I assume something is wrong with me.

I don't care how smart you may be or think you should be, if you've never done something before, it's totally normal—if not inevitable—that you

won't be able to do it well, yet. Expecting anything else is sheer delusion. So, stop expecting yourself to be where you aren't, yet. Avoid:

Beating yourself up because the draft of your first book sucks,

Criticizing yourself because your first coaching session with your first client wasn't as good as you wanted it to be, and

Blaming yourself because your first workshop was a total disaster.

There is no failure, only feedback.

Reality will keep telling you that you suck to give you the impetus to do something about it and improve over time. And that's exactly the way it should be. Remember, your failures say nothing about you, personally. They only shed light on your current lack of experience.

If you find yourself in similar situations to the above, realize you lack proper experience and do what it takes to learn what you need to learn. Seek out people who excel in what you need to learn and ask for their guidance. Usually, they'll be happy to help. Otherwise, you may keep feeling ashamed for many years, often about unimportant things.

3) I'm doing okay

Another tool that will allow you to overcome feelings of inadequacy is self-compassion. As we've already seen, you are exactly where you're supposed

to be in life and you're doing okay at your own level. In fact, it's not possible to not be good enough because it would go against reality itself.

Your feelings of inadequacy often result from your interpretations of reality and what you choose to focus your attention upon. People with a healthy self-esteem tend to focus on all the things they do well. They repeatedly acknowledge their small successes and, as a result, feel confident in their ability to deal with future obstacles. When something doesn't go as planned, these people accept it, knowing they can't always get things right the first time and will do better next time. Put simply, they have a more realistic view of things and, as a result, they feel good about themselves.

So, start acknowledging all your successes and avoid beating yourself up when things don't go exactly as planned.

Finally, always bear in mind that you can improve. In fact, with practice and experience, improvement is inevitable. You might not be where you want to be yet, but you will be in the future.

Do you feel overwhelmed? Do you feel stuck and unable to move forward with your projects?

Sometimes, to boost your focus and overcome your procrastination, you must close all the open loops in your life. Unfinished business takes up mental space and, as it accumulates over time, it can lead you to feel stuck and unable to do get anything done.

If this is the case for you, it's time you declutter your mind. A simple way of doing this is to make a list of all the incomplete tasks—small and big—you can think of. Just write down anything that comes to mind. It can be a small chore such as posting a letter or a big task, like completing a major project at work.

Once you've written everything down, schedule a block of time to complete as many as possible. As you cross them off your list, you'll start feeling good about yourself, and this will generate momentum. This momentum will give you the motivation you need to move forward.

Another thing you can do is identify the one task you've been putting off for way too long. Once you've identified the task, complete it immediately. If you can't do so, schedule it and make sure you complete it as soon as possible. Achieving just one task can give you enough momentum to tackle the next and the next and, as a result, put you back on track toward your major goals.

Close the open loops in your life and you'll free the mental space needed to focus completely on your major goals.

* * *

Action steps

If you feel stuck, complete one of the two things below:

Write down all the things you need to do. Then schedule a block of time and complete as many as possible.

Identify the one task you've been putting off for too long and complete it.

Part VII

Seventeen strategies to boost your focus

In this section, I put together seventeen strategies covered in this book. Use it as a reminder when you find yourself being out of focus. You'll also find this list in your action guide.

Strategies to boost your focus

A. Know what you want

Gaining clarity regarding what you want will allow you to set the right priorities, placing your focus where it needs to be.

1. Find your strengths. Take time to identify what you're good at and enjoy doing.

2. Uncover your passion. Discover what you're passionate about.

3. Identify your core values. Create a list of your top core values and strive to live by them every day.

4. Create a long-term vision for your life. Spend time to craft a compelling vision that you can break down into smaller tasks to complete each day and each week.

B. Plan effectively

Planning will help you move from one task to the next, while avoiding becoming overly distracted.

5. Plan your day. Start your day by writing down the few key tasks you want to complete that day.

6. Write down your goals. Write your goals in a notebook and leave it open on your desk so that you can see it. Read the list whenever you start feeling distracted.

7. Carve out uninterrupted blocks of time. Schedule blocks of time to focus on your most important project(s), and make sure you are not interrupted.

C. Build momentum

Generate momentum by putting in place effective daily routines.

8. Make the correct domino fall. Implement one daily habit that will make it easier for you to achieve your goals.

9. Implement a morning ritual. Put in place a daily ritual. Make sure it helps you maximize your focus. For instance, this could be by starting with your major tasks or doing meditation.

D. Reduce distractions

Minimize distractions by using the "power of less."

10. Focus only on a few key goals. Remove goals that aren't absolute priorities, so you can give your undivided attention to your major goals.

11. Complete a digital detox. Avoid checking your digital devices first thing in the morning. Instead, create a morning ritual that includes your most important tasks.

12. Batch distracting activities together. Create a daily routine that includes all your distracting activities such as visiting social media, answering emails or web surfing, to minimize your daily distractions.

13. Empty your inbox. Unsubscribe from all your newsletters except the few you're actually reading and enjoying. Do this regularly—at least monthly.

14. Optimize your environment. Get rid of everything that has the potential to distract you. Clean your desk, turn off your phone, close unnecessary windows on your computer, et cetera.

15. Say “No” more often. Learn to decline requests that aren’t in line with your values and goals.

E. Manage your energy well

Make effective use of your energy to increase your focus and boost your productivity.

16. Master the fundamentals. Sleep well, eat well and exercise regularly. These are fundamental to boosting your energy and enhancing your focus.

17. Make the most of peak energy levels. Make sure you work on your key tasks when you have the most energy available. For many people this is in the morning.

Implement these strategies and you’ll see your focus improve over time. Remember, you can either be focused or distracted, but you can’t be both at the same time.

Conclusion

I would like to congratulate you for reading until the end. It's already a sign you've sharpened your focus.

My sincere hope is that you will take action on everything you learned in this book and start developing a ruthless focus that will make people around you wonder how you can get so much done.

Remember, for the most part, your ability to focus determines the type of future you'll create for yourself. By focusing on the right thing, both consistently and for long enough, you will enter the flow, build momentum and achieve extraordinary results in the long term.

As you clarify your vision and create a clear daily plan, your focus will improve and your tendency to jump from one project to another will diminish. As you develop a mastery mindset and stick to one thing until you achieve results, you will start to see tangible results in every area of your life.

In a world where distractions are everywhere and people's attention span is becoming shorter, learn to stick at what matters to you until you achieve positive results and you will stand out. Keep thinking in the long term and do something every day to move closer to your vision and you will be amazed at what you can accomplish.

In short, learn to master your focus. Then observe everything change for you in the coming years.

Finally, remember to be kind to yourself, always. Whenever you become distracted, gently pull your attention back to your goals. Do this over and over again until it becomes a habit, and you'll become one of the most focused people you've ever met.

If you have any questions or want to share your story with me, please feel free to contact me at any time at: thibaut.meurisse@gmail.com.

I'm always happy to learn what my readers are up to!

Also, if you know other people who lack focus, recommend this book to them and challenge them to master their focus.

May the power of focus be with you.

Warm regards,

Thibaut Meurisse.

Founder of Whatispersonaldevelopment.org

What do you think?

I hope you benefit from this book. I would be very grateful if you could take a moment to leave an honest review.

Thanks again for your support!

Thibaut Meurisse

About the Author

THIBAUT MEURISSE

Thibaut Meurisse is a personal development blogger, author, and founder of whatispersonaldevelopment.org.

He has been featured on major personal development websites such as Lifehack, Goalcast, TinyBuddha, Addicted2Success, MotivationGrid or PickTheBrain.

Obsessed with self-improvement and fascinated by the power of the brain, his personal mission is to help people realize their full potential and reach higher levels of fulfillment and consciousness.

In love with foreign languages, he is French, writes in English, and lived in Japan for almost ten years.

Learn more about Thibaut at:

whatispersonaldevelopment.org

thibaut.meurisse@gmail.com

Also by Thibaut Meurisse

Success Principles

Success: Why You Fail Where Others Succeed - 5 Personal Development Tips You Wish You Knew

Crush Your Limits: Break Free From Mental Limitations and Achieve Your True Potential

Success is Inevitable: 17 Laws to Unlock Your Hidden Potential, Skyrocket Your Confidence and Get What You Want From Life

Standalone

Find What You Love: 5 Tips to Uncover Your Passion Quickly and Easily

Goal Setting: The Ultimate Guide to Achieving Goals that Truly Excite You

Life-Changing Habit Series: Your Personal Blueprint For Success and Happiness

Habits That Stick: The Ultimate Guide to Building Powerful Habits that Stick Once and For All

Master Your Focus: A Practical Guide to Stop Chasing the Next Thing and Focus on What Matters Until It's Done

Success Principles Series